



# THE MIND OF NAPOLEON

A STUDY OF  
NAPOLEON, MR ROOSEVELT,  
AND THE MONEY POWER

BY  
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Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain  
that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the Watch-  
man waketh but in vain.

Psalm cxxvii. 1.





TO MY FRIEND

THE REV. S. N. L. FORD

VICAR OF ALL SOULS, LOUDOUN ROAD, LONDON

To whom I am indebted for a new understanding of the Christian faith, and who, by the excellence of his eloquence, is contributing powerfully to the work of restoration and regeneration.



## PREFACE

AT this hour the fate of the world is being decided. That greatest of all international powers, Money, already sorely wounded in more than ten years of indecisive conflict, is recoiling for a final assault on the man who, in the space of one year, has driven this enemy of mankind to the brink of irretrievable disaster. If men and women knew what was happening their attitude would be that of a friend of mine who told me recently:

“I can scarcely bear to live from one day to another.”

It is my object in this book to display, against its historical background, the battle between the President of the United States and the Masters of Money, so that my reader may be able to watch the struggle for himself, and, as I hope, take part in the struggle as a good citizen.

. . . . .

Two years ago his Holiness the Pope addressed to the world a message on the economic crisis in the form of the Encyclical known as *Quadragesimo Anno*. In that message the occupant of the Holy See pointed out with an excellent clearness the evils which underlie the existing dislocations of European and world society. Readers of the Encyclical, and especially, perhaps, Protestant readers who, like myself, had been studying economic history, recognized that tone of high authority which, in the Age of Faith, at all times, characterized

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the advice and direction of the Church. The Pope, we felt, had dared, in the name of Christ the King, to challenge the Masters of Money, and so had restored to a new validity the ancient doctrine of the Canonists.

The momentous character of this challenge is not yet fully understood, because men are not yet persuaded that the Christian civilization of Europe was something wholly different and distinct from what passes to-day as Christian civilization, and are not, therefore, alive to the most urgent necessity of these times—namely, the restoration of the lost civilization. But enlightenment, happily, is on the way. All the Christian Churches have responded to the Pope's call, and each, in its own way, has ranged itself upon the side of the victims of economic calamity against the authors of calamity. Faith and hope are returning, slowly, to a world which has learned, by bitter and terrible experience, that there is no substitute for either in the affairs of men and that the affairs of men proclaim and make manifest—in their catastrophe no less than in their good ordering—the truth that above man there is God.

It is matter of note that the awakening of Christendom has coincided in point of time with the appearance, in the United States of America, of a leader endowed with the same quality of exalted courage as that displayed by the Holy Father. I mean President Roosevelt. And it is to be noted further that, from the hour of his inauguration, when he proclaimed a "dedication" to Almighty God of the American People, Mr Roosevelt has continued to affirm his faith in Christian principles as the only means of escape from the horrors of the existing situation. Nor has the President failed to put

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these principles into execution, and so to bestow upon the men and women he represents the spiritual inheritance of Christendom. What Mr Roosevelt is achieving in America is not a revolution but a restoration.

I am aware that, in attempting to institute a comparison between this work of restoration and the labours of Napoleon I, I am incurring risk. Napoleon's name has become, for the majority of men, a synonym of ruthless and unscrupulous ambition. He has been condemned as the man who loved war and tried, by war, to make himself master of the world. The honour of having destroyed such a monster has long been contested among statesmen and soldiers, and the names of different heroes have found favour at different times—for example, Talleyrand, Metternich, Alexander I of Russia and the Duke of Wellington. More recently the honour has been claimed—by the writer of a film—on behalf of the House of Rothschild; but a counter-claim that the House of Baring was the real giant-killer has been entered. These illustrious money-lenders, if the judgment of the nineteenth century upon Napoleon is to stand, deserve a place certainly among the saviours of humanity.

It is evident, however, from the writings of critics of the film, that neither the English nor the American people is ready to agree that Napoleon was, in fact, defeated by usury. I confess that I have read these criticisms with a lively interest because, some two years ago, I ventured, in a life of the King of Rome, Napoleon's son, to suggest that money-lenders had played a chief part in the Emperor's ruin. I incurred the wrath of critics on both sides of the Atlantic, who told

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me that it was time I devoted myself to the study of history. I am fortified, to-day, in knowledge of the fact that the writer of the film shares some of my views, and in the belief that he has constructed his story from reliable materials.

That being so, it remains to ask if the conventional picture of Napoleon is a just and true picture. I have spent many years in studying his life; my opinion, for what it is worth, differs wholly from that of the nineteenth-century historians. Unlike the writer of the film, these historians have considered Napoleon apart from his relations with the financial system, and have consequently, or so I think, failed to understand his policy or to form any true idea about the difficulties which confronted him. In the pages which follow I have tried to fill in the empty places of what is now, not incorrectly, described as "Whig history." If the task has not been easy, at least it has provided the kind of exhilaration which a scientific observer experiences when new facts press themselves upon his attention.

These new facts, I am happy to know, are being studied to-day with a zeal which is full of good augury for the future. It is a pleasure, for example, to acknowledge debt to such pioneers of the New Economics as Mr Arthur Kitson, Major Douglas, Professor Soddy, Lord Tavistock, Mr Orage and Mr Ezra Pound. It is an inspiration to witness the efforts of those brilliant young men and women who are associated with the *New Britain* Movement. Nor can I refrain from acknowledging the help I have received from the monumental works of that great economist and courageous Englishman, Mr R. G. Hawtrey. The works of

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Mr Keynes, of Professor Irving Fisher and of Professor Warren, to mention only three names among many, have been sources of much enlightenment:

I should show myself ungrateful if I did not pay tribute to the help I have received from my friend, Mr Featherstone Hammond, whose careful and substantial researches into the economic conditions prevailing in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries have provided me with much of the material embodied in this book. I urge my reader to study Mr Hammond's work. Some of that work appeared in *G. K.'s Weekly*, to the Editor of which I am also indebted for encouragement and help. Nor can I omit to acknowledge debt to Mr G. K. Chesterton and Mr Hilaire Belloc, pioneers of the modern study of history. I owe a debt further to my friend Mr Christopher Hollis, whose book, *The Breakdown of Money*, deserves the most careful reading.

A short time ago I listened to a most courageous denunciation of usury as a deadly sin by my friend, the Rev. S. N. L. Ford, Vicar of All Souls, Loudoun Road, London. So unequivocal a denunciation has not been spoken, so far as I know, from any pulpit of the Established Church during the past two centuries, and the occasion therefore is memorable. In dedicating this book to Mr Ford I am trying to express something of the admiration and respect which I feel for a man who has recognized that the "golden rule" of Love stands above all other considerations whatsoever, and has not been afraid to say so.

R. McNAIR WILSON.

LONDON, *July* 12, 1934.





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## BOOK I

### PROCESSION INTO RUIN

"The Emperor said he had been very warm and sincere at the beginning of the Revolution; that he had cooled by degrees in proportion as he acquired more just and solid ideas. His Jacobinism had sunk under the political absurdities and monstrous domestic excesses of our legislators. Finally his republican faith had vanished."

Las Cases. *Memorial of St Helena*. I, ii, p. 349.



## CHAPTER I

### FLAW

ON May 15, 1768, King Louis XV of France signed at Versailles a Treaty with the Republic of Genoa, whereby, for the sum of £80,000, he bought the island of Corsica. The Genoese were glad to be rid of a bad investment. These greedy international money-lenders had squeezed Corsica so unmercifully that even their own kith and kin in the island had turned against them and joined the native clans of the interior in a refusal to pay further tribute. Corsica, under her patriot chief, Pascal Paoli, was in open revolt. The Genoese knew of many better ways of disposing of their credit than hiring French and Swiss soldiers to reconquer the island.

King Louis, on the other hand, was glad to acquire Corsica because of its nearness to his great naval base of Toulon and because Paoli had been trying to make over the island to England. He behaved as the King of England might have been expected to behave if the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight had invited the French to possess themselves of that island. An army was sent to Corsica. Paoli defeated it, inflicting on King Louis, at the same time, losses to the amount of £1,000,000. The King of France despatched a second army. Corsica was conquered.

During this second campaign the wife of one of Paoli's aides-de-camp, named Carlo Buonaparte, accompanied

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her husband, though she was six months with child. She said afterwards: <sup>1</sup>

"I carried my Napoleon under my heart with the same calm pleasure that I felt when, afterwards, I held him in my arms and fed him at my breast. My thoughts were occupied solely with his father and the fate of Corsica, and to gain news of the army I often left the safety of our mountain recesses and ventured into the scene of action, where I heard the balls whistling round my ears without a shadow of fear, as I trusted to the protection of the Holy Virgin."

This young woman, like her husband, was an Italian. She certainly preferred the French and Italian families, among whom she had been brought up, to the wild clansmen of the mountains. But, like her husband, she had fallen under Paoli's spell and learned, at his bidding, to call herself Corsican.<sup>2</sup> Only when he had been defeated and driven into exile in England did her native instincts reassert themselves. Then a cool judgment came to the help of a firm will. Letizia Buonaparte urged upon her husband, who wanted to share Paoli's exile, that his duty, on the contrary, lay at home. He could speak French. He was of noble Italian stock. God, said his wife, had called him to be the mediator between the island folk and their conquerors.

It was good logic, and Carlo was not the man to

<sup>1</sup> See the memoirs dictated by the mother of Napoleon in her old age. They are included in Larrey's volumes: *Madame Mère*.

<sup>2</sup> The manner in which the Ligurian families gradually became Corsican recalls nothing so much as the transformation of English families into Irish. Corsica, like Ireland, swallows her conquerors. The Buonapartes were said by some to have come originally from Greece. But no substantial evidence in support of this view exists.

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resist it. Once his enthusiasm had cooled he saw that Corsica must inevitably belong to France, seeing that France could not afford to relinquish it. The idea that the islanders could sustain resistance in such circumstances was grotesque. The young man made his peace with the conquerors and set about the congenial task of getting as much as possible out of them both for his country and for himself. He received a patent of nobility from King Louis, having proved that he was of noble Italian descent, and became one of the twelve members of the Upper House of the island.<sup>1</sup>

But though he attached importance to these honours he was very far indeed from having assimilated the ideas of a French nobleman. On the contrary, he remained imbued with the liberal doctrines of Paoli and Rousseau, spent much of his time discussing politics, and sustained a reputation for intellectual independence by refraining, except on special occasions, from going to Mass. Although his wife was diligent in the practice of religion, and although his uncle, the Archdeacon of Ajaccio, lived permanently in his house, he continued in his stubborn courses. His children, consequently, formed the idea that churchgoing was a function of women and old men.

Other ideas soon gathered about this idea, reinforcing and colouring it. Whereas their father was easy-going

<sup>1</sup> It is often forgotten that Napoleon's father was a nobleman of both the French and the Italian nobilities. The Italian family of Buonaparte recognized him as its heir. It was a family of very great antiquity. Consequently the statement made by the Emperor Francis of Austria that he would not have given his daughter to Napoleon had he not known that "his family is as good as my own" was not an exaggeration. The Buonapartes were as "old" as the Hapsburgs. Napoleon, however, did not like the statement of his father-in-law and replied to it that his patent of nobility dated from the battle of Montenotte. In spite of that reply it is true that Napoleon was a patrician, in the feudal sense.



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and good-natured, their mother exerted a severe discipline; whereas he was well-informed, extravagant, and possessed of agreeable manners, she was almost illiterate and exercised a fierce thriftiness that precluded social contacts except under compulsion. Joseph and Napoleon, the two eldest sons, suffering their mother's wholesome restraints, gazed in childish wonder at the exalted being, their father, who was miraculously free to do whatever he liked. To the hero and courtier (Carlo had been to Versailles), whom their mother held up to their admiration, there was added the rebel against authority. The children made up their minds that they were lucky to possess so excellent and conspicuous a sire.

In the case of Napoleon this idea became, very soon, a strong tower against a host of enemies. He was sent, at seven years of age, to the military academy at Brienne, his father having obtained his appointment as a King's scholar in that institution. He found himself suddenly a pariah among foreign boys, who despised him as Corsican, as commoner and as pensioner.<sup>1</sup> They were the sons of the great houses of France. They did not spare a school-fellow who debased their language with the horrible Corsican-Italian patois and at the same time expected them to take him seriously. They talked about the conquest of Corsica and about the "natives" of that island. The Corsican boy tried to teach them history with his fists. In secret he read a translation of Boswell's *Tour in Corsica*,<sup>2</sup> and built shrines to Paoli

<sup>1</sup> See for this period of Napoleon's life the memoirs of his school-fellow Bourienne.

<sup>2</sup> Boswell went to Corsica with a letter of introduction to Paoli from Rousseau. His book *A Tour in Corsica* describes that visit. It was translated into French and read by Napoleon at Brienne.

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and his own father. He also read Plutarch's *Lives* and swallowed whole the doctrine of heroes. The fact that Jean Jacques Rousseau had given the Corsicans a pat on the back as true sons of liberty, caused him, in addition, to swallow whole the writings of that popular philosopher. When he read Rousseau he felt that Corsicans were superior to Frenchmen, and was thus enabled to endure, as a sacrifice for his country, what otherwise might have been unendurable. Thanks to his father, Rousseau's ideas were not wholly unfamiliar to him when he made his first independent contacts with them. But they acquired now a sanction which had been lacking in Corsica. Napoleon's mother had never approved of her husband's opinions; she had been at pains to instil into her children's minds the truths of Christianity as she understood them, and to warn them, at the same time, against the dangers of neglecting these truths. Her second son had consented willingly to her teaching because he loved her. With his admiration of his father questionings had been mingled. But such questionings were thrown to the winds in the Royal Military Academy where the masters were French priests and the scholars the sons of French noblemen.

As it happened, the doctrines of Rousseau were being received in France herself with lively enthusiasm. Men spoke of a "new evangel" and abandoned hastily the religion of their fathers for the faith of the Swiss. The word liberty was on every lip; in every heart dwelt the hope of change, that passionate looking forward to of a different kind of existence which is one of the symptoms of social decay. Nobody seems to have known what

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kind of change he wanted, for France was as prosperous as she had ever been and as well governed. It was change itself which seduced—the prospect of movement, of transmutation, of action.

There is incongruity, at first sight, in the spectacle of a nation athirst for action and at the same time absorbed in the mechanism of politics. But this apparent paradox resolves when the truth is understood that politics to the French, in the year 1780, were the means by which deliverance was to be achieved. Politics were the machine for making liberty. All hands were outstretched to turn those magical wheels by whose revolutions the world would be made new.

Such excitement proclaims, always, the breakdown of government, not in its day-to-day operations but in its spirit. Whenever, in human story, peoples have become infected with this restlessness, weakness of a fatal kind has existed somewhere in the structure of society. Indeed the restlessness is analogous to that seen in a hive which has lost its queen. There is suddenly no horizon, no future. The law of association is broken. Bees and men are scattered.

In the year 1780 none in France knew that there existed in the structure of society a flaw of so serious a nature as to imperil that structure. The country, as has been said, was prosperous, if allowance is made for the effects of the Seven Years' War. There was no sign which all might see that dissolution was approaching. On the contrary, government was more liberal than it had been for a century. An honest and popular King sat on the throne; he was supported by an honest,

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popular and very able minister, namely, Turgot,<sup>1</sup> who was, apparently, pledged to the task of removing such abuses as existed. Versailles enjoyed the respect of France and of the world, and on the showing of such reliable and shrewd witnesses as Arthur Young there was no occasion, anywhere, for anxiety. The pictures of pre-Revolutionary France which have been presented during a century can be, and have been, demolished by reference to the facts of the case. These pictures were invented after the Revolution in order to explain it. Those who drew them were aware that disease of the social organism must have been present, since the organism had died. They were, further, imbued with the idea that any people living under an effective monarchy must be oppressed and therefore mutinous. Consequently in making their autopsies they looked for the evidence which they expected to find, and took at their face value the assertions of those of the partisans whose views agreed most closely with their own.

It is enough answer to their findings that, as has been said, they lack a basis in fact. If further answers be desired, however, it may be pointed out that the diseases from which the French monarchy is reputed to have died have never been fatal to any established government. Governments do not perish because they

<sup>1</sup> Reference should be made to *The Life and Writings of Turgot*, by Walter Stephens (Longmans Green). It may be taken as a general conclusion that the state of France just before the Revolution was, on the whole, better than it had been during a very long period. All those who have searched for a cause of the Revolution in some sudden hardship of the people have failed to produce even a semblance of evidence. Turgot wrote to the King in most peremptory fashion. Louis replied quite humbly. (See the writer's *Monarchy of Money Power*.) The reader is referred to Arthur Young's great book.

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inflict heavy burdens in the form of taxes and reductions of income—as the progress of the World Crisis since 1929 has amply demonstrated. Nor do demands for personal sacrifice, even when these demands are resisted, offer any serious threat to government. In fact King Louis XVI lightened the burdens of his people and asked for sacrifices chiefly from rich landowners. He practised an economy never before displayed by any French King. He was a man of exemplary piety and of irreproachable private life. He was, moreover, on the showing of Turgot, whose opinion ought to carry weight, a strong as well as a brave man, endowed with moral courage and fixity of purpose.

Why then, as his reign progressed, did his subjects begin to look past him towards some Messianic dawn of the nature of which none of them possessed any clear conception? Why, without losing their affection for him, did they cease to rely on him? Why were they restless, as if already the King's authority was broken? To answer these questions it is necessary to form an idea of the bases upon which the French monarchy rested and upon which it had been established. These bases were the Christian religion on the one hand and popular support on the other. Kingship in France embodied the facts of paternity and family ties. It was a means whereby the love which brother feels for brother could be extended also to fellow-subject. The King was the vehicle of his people's goodwill; he was also their protector against the oppression and greed of powerful interests within and without the kingdom. These functions of King and people were interdependent in the sense that it was the people who made the

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King effective, and the King who made the people effective. Such effectiveness, it is true, had often been achieved and displayed for limited periods by popular leaders. The inner secret of kingship resided in its permanence. Kingship, unlike popular leadership, could function without enthusiasm or excitement, in quiet times as well as in times of emotional crisis. This quality belonged to its essential nature as a fatherhood.

The King's office, in other words, was a mirror of human fatherhood on the one hand and of Divine Fatherhood on the other. Its authority was essentially religious. The King was *primus inter pares* among the sons of God, as was also every *chef de famille* in the land. He filled his office, as fathers do, by the grace of God, that God might be glorified in his people's welfare. The foundation of Christian kingship therefore was the Christian faith. It was Christianity which gave to the throne of France its quality of permanence, which guaranteed its authority and which strengthened its executive power. Louis XIV in his letters to his son wrote:<sup>1</sup>

"Armies, Council, and all human activities would be a weak means of maintaining us on the Throne if everyone thought he had an equal right to it with ourselves and did not reverence a higher power of which our own is a portion. The public respect which we render to this Invisible Power might in fact be called justly the most important part of our policy had it not a nobler and more disinterested motive as a duty. . . . We are wanting not only in gratitude and a sense of justice but also in prudence and a good sense when

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<sup>1</sup> See *A King's Lessons in Statecraft* (Louis XIV's letters to his son). Translated by Herbert Wilson. (Unwin.)

only in religion. In the case of the French monarchy, as in the earlier case of the English monarchy, paralysis had its origin not in Kingship but in Christianity, the foundation of kingship.

The truth is that, under prolonged and ever-increasing pressure, the more terrible in that it was applied secretly, Christian teaching about the structure of states, their politics and their economics, had undergone change. That teaching, in the Middle Ages, had been clear and unequivocal; it had grown confused and halting, especially in the vital matter of money. The *Canonists*,<sup>1</sup> following the Mosaic law, had condemned all money-lending at interest as deadly sin. They had laid it down that no Christian could practise usury, because usury by its nature offended against the teaching of Christ. This view was expressed in terms that have now passed into disuse, but the argument has lost none of its weight. A man, it was held, who produced goods for his neighbour's service, or who was partner, whether actively or as a shareholder, in an enterprise having for its object the production of goods, was living according to the Christian Canon. He was working for his fellows, who were free to accept or to reject his work as they chose. If his fellows accepted his work he prospered; if they rejected it he suffered loss. In either case he was content to abide by the decision of those whom he essayed to benefit.

In sharp contrast to this man, said the Canonists, was he who lent money at a fixed rate of interest. The

<sup>1</sup> The many volumes of St Thomas Aquinas contain the whole theory of the Canonists. Many shorter works exist, and Mr C. F. Hammond's writings afford a clear account of the essential principles.

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reconciliation was possible between the command of Christ to love our neighbour and the system of money-lending. Experience had shown that money-lending frequently made slaves of the borrowers, reducing them often to the direst poverty and stripping them, in the process, of their dignity as men and Christians. Money-lending, consequently, as has been said, was prohibited and punished with the utmost severity. But the system survived these rigours. So profitable was it, and so certain in its effects, that men were ready to incur almost any risk in pursuit of it and to pay almost any price for the right of its practice. The history of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries bears witness to the deathless persistence with which, secretly, usurers laid siege to Christianity. In the event these assaults were successful. The ban on money-lending was gradually relaxed; the doctrine of the Canonists was subjected to interpretations which robbed it of its effectiveness.

So great a change in Christian teaching was bound to have effects of the most serious kind, as is easily understood when it is realized that a "deadly sin" had been freed from its sinfulness. It had become sin now, on the contrary, to default on one's debts to money-lenders even when these money-lenders, by manipulation of the price level, had made payment impossible. The strength of the Church was undermined and She was split up into warring factions,<sup>1</sup> each one of which, however, accepted the principle of usury. Though the laws against money-lenders remained in most countries, they were no longer put into force. On the contrary,

<sup>1</sup> It would be an interesting subject of inquiry how far the modifications of the Canonist doctrine contributed to the various schisms in the Church.



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governments everywhere had recourse to these people, who speedily acquired power and position and honour. The institution of monarchy was now, evidently, doomed because a King who is dependent upon usurers cannot be the father of his people or give his people protection from those who would exploit them.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RIGHTS OF MAN

It says much for the understanding of the European money-lenders that they recognized that religion can only be overcome by means of religion. The spearhead of the attack on the doctrine of the Canonists had been another doctrine—namely, that Man has rights, among them the right to do what he wills with his own. This doctrine of human right possessed a respectable antiquity. It bore just enough resemblance to the Christian claim to “dignity as man and Christian” to be capable of being substituted for that claim.

Unwary Christians, therefore, accepted readily the ideas which are inherent in the doctrine of natural right without, in most cases, realizing that this doctrine is a denial of Christianity. For it is of the essence of Christianity that the Christian dedicates himself to the service of his fellows. Christianity begins with death, a fact proclaimed in the rite of baptism, whereby, formerly, the convert was wholly immersed in water to signify burial and raised again out of the water to signify resurrection. The convert died unto himself and was buried; he rose as a being consecrated and reborn. That such a man should lay claim to and demand any right other than that of service was manifestly absurd. The fact, therefore, that millions of professing Christians subscribed in France on the eve of the Revolution to

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the doctrine of natural right is proof that Christianity had already been weakened by dilution with another faith. Both clergy and King, consequently, as has been said, found themselves in an impossible position. What they professed and what they could accomplish were so widely different both in quality and in degree that alienation of public sympathy and even of public respect was sooner or later inevitable. A civilization that had endured for more than a thousand years was ruined and undermined. So helpless indeed had the Church in France become that many honest and intelligent men divested themselves of the Christian name as a title, if not of infamy, at least of ignorance. Only stupid peasants, they declared, could believe such nonsense, in a world where so many of the high dignitaries of the Church openly denied her doctrines and plundered and exploited their fellows. If this process of reason had not, generally, been sustained against the Monarchy, that was only because the money-lenders had hopes of making use of the Throne and had refrained, so far, from attacking it with violence.

The money-lenders' weapon was the printing-press, and it is certainly significant that all the great journals of Europe were founded immediately before or during the Revolution, and that many of them were owned or actively supported by bankers. Most of these newspapers began as broadsheets which were handed from reader to reader. All preached the same doctrine of human right which, it was asserted, was inherent in Nature. All demanded that, for the future, human affairs should be guided by the light of reason. All exalted beauty as the spiritual quality in Nature by

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which and through which regeneration ought to be accomplished.

There was nothing new, of course, in this teaching, except perhaps the crude manner of its presentation. Greece and Rome had known it and given it shape and substance until, at the coming of Christianity, it had withered away. The withering of Christianity, on the contrary, made it young again. Minds, restless and uneasy in a frozen world, found the joy of Spring in Rousseau's positive assertions that society could discover salvation within itself. Here, it seemed to many Christians, was a restatement of the teaching that "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you"; men heard a promise spoken to Hope and Courage that they should be the architects of a better world. Generous spirits made instant and vigorous response. Every young man became his own priest and king to the end that the frost which held Church and Throne in impotence might be dispelled in terms of the whole people.

"In these days," wrote Napoleon, after the Revolution had begun, "every man with red blood in his body is a Jacobin."

Napoleon as cadet, and later as sub-lieutenant of artillery, had plenty of red blood in his body. He had already, as has been said, adopted the religious and political views of his father. The conquest of Corsica by the French continued to embitter all his relations with that people, partly because he was proud of his race and partly because Frenchmen still tended to treat him as an inferior. Stubborn native independence and the unexpungable pride of blood were allied therefore to philosophy. This system of Monarchy, by which

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the excellent patriarchal system of the Corsicans had been broken, became, in his developing mind, a symbol of tyranny and corruption. His mind was full of visions. He saw himself at one moment as the liberator of Corsica from the French yoke; at another as the bearer to his native island of the new ideas by which France herself was so powerfully agitated. But beneath these movements of heated imagination, his intelligence remained detached and cool. He did not for a moment doubt that his father had done well to espouse the French cause, and he thanked his father again and again for having obtained for him the advantage of a first-class education as a soldier. The Corsican and the soldier, indeed, remained unreconciled within his spirit. Very early in his career he won approval as an officer of exceptional merit. But his leisure time, and even his rest were sacrificed to studies, the object of which was a vindication of Corsica. During nearly the whole period of his service as sub-lieutenant Napoleon had no other ambition than to write and publish a history of his native land.<sup>1</sup>

What little is known of that history suggests that its author saw in Corsica the last beneficiary of Imperial Rome. The Corsicans, as he constantly assured himself, were Italians. Italy herself had fallen on evil days and become a nation of slaves, but this process of corruption had not, happily, spread to the island folk. On the contrary, the Corsicans preserved the frugality, the courage and the capacity for high thinking which had

<sup>1</sup> An excellent book on Napoleon's early days is *The Growth of Napoleon*, by Norwood Young. (John Murray.) It is bitterly hostile to Napoleon, but contains a mine of information.

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distinguished the Roman patricians. He had driven that belief with his fists into the bodies of his school-fellows at Brienne.

"If you had been only four to one," he had declared, "it would not have mattered. We (the Corsicans) would have driven you out. But you were ten to one."

Napoleon's reading had taught him that the Romans had based their statecraft on the philosophy of the Stoics. He felt himself in consequence, as Corsican-Italian, the spiritual heir of Marcus Aurelius, who was the spiritual heir of the Athenians. The Stoic philosophy began to exercise over him an influence which grew with knowledge of it. He found in it the comfort which his heart needed. It satisfied at once his patriotism, his instincts and his pride. But it gave him qualms, occasionally, about the acceptance of French rule.

"What spectacle shall I see in my country?" he wrote shortly before one of his visits to Ajaccio.<sup>1</sup> "My fellow-countrymen carrying chains and kissing in fear the hand which is oppressing them. They are no longer the brave Corsicans whom a hero (Paoli) inspired with his virtues—the enemies of tyrants, of luxury, of vile courtiers.

"Proud, filled with a noble feeling of his personal importance, a Corsican (of the old school) was happy if he had spent his day over public affairs. He passed his night in the arms of a dear wife; her understanding and love effaced all the day's distresses. Tenderness—Nature herself—made these nights like the nights of the gods. But with liberty they have

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Norwood Young. *The Growth of Napoleon.*

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vanished like dreams, these happy days. Frenchmen, not content with having torn from us all that we valued, you have corrupted our morals."

Meanwhile he was reading Plato in a French translation and assuring himself that Rousseau had begun where the Greeks ended. Rousseau had restored to Europe the spiritual inheritance of Athens and Rome—and Corsica. Had not the philosopher written: <sup>1</sup>

"There is still to be found in Europe a country capable of making laws; that is the island of Corsica. The courage and the constancy with which this brave people has recovered and defended its freedom deserve that some wise man should be found among them to teach them how to preserve it. I have a presentiment that some day this little island will astonish Europe."

Was this day at hand? Was he, Napoleon, the chosen "wise man"? It was Marcus Aurelius who had described and defined the "Wise Man" by whose example of frugality and self-denial all his fellows might achieve a high plane of living. Scorn of the French deepened in his heart, mingling there with scorn of their politics and their religion. Not only did Napoleon lose faith in Christianity and Monarchy; he held them both in contempt as tawdry substitutes for that classic virtue of which his people, with their faults, remained the exemplars. Millions of Frenchmen, as has been said, cherished the same views. The classic revival was already in full swing. But whereas the French were

<sup>1</sup> Rousseau, J. J. *Contrat Social*.

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interested as citizens or patriots, Napoleon was interested as victim. Had he not been King's scholar at Brienne? Every passionate impulse, good and bad, drove him towards this new faith which, at the same time, his intellect so cordially approved. Before the Revolution he was already a ~~revolutionary~~, a republican, and a free-thinker. Nature was his goddess, science his prophet. He worshipped Reason, Liberty, Humanity, Beauty; but above all he worshipped Courage and Endurance, Discipline, Resource, Patriotism. A memorandum which he wrote while at the military school at Paris is eloquent testimony to his faith. He urged that young officers ought to be accustomed to danger and privation, made to eat "soldiers' bread," and taught to look upon luxury as a great enemy of their calling.

It is instructive to observe that this Stoic philosophy did not by any means correspond exactly to the teachings of Rousseau. Rousseau was certainly much nearer to Plato than to the Stoics. In the view of the philosopher of Geneva, Nature was always mild and benevolent, a perennial fountain of virtue and goodness and kindness. Thus, though Napoleon was a revolutionary before the Revolution, he had small part in the idealistic liberalism which was the Revolution's first mood. The qualities which his stern and honest mother had bequeathed to him made him reject, instinctively, the conception of a world without discipline, nor was he disposed favourably towards the unordered liberty about which so many Frenchmen were talking. Human nature, he felt, can achieve moral grandeur only in response to the stimulus of enthusiasm. If he read and re-read his Plutarch that was because he felt assured that, in his own phrase,



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"there are no men, there is only a Man." The people needed, above all things, leadership and inspiration, discipline and faith.

While he was still very young he wrote a criticism of Rousseau's philosophy in which the movement of his mind is revealed, and which, evidently, holds the promise of changes to come. It runs:

"NOTES UPON THE DISCOURSE ON THE ORIGIN AND  
FOUNDATION OF THE INEQUALITY AMONG MEN.  
BY J. J. ROUSSEAU.<sup>1</sup>

"Rousseau says:

"It is in the consciousness of his moral liberty that man shows the spirituality of his soul. Self-preservation is almost his only concern. His most active faculties must be those whose main purpose is attack and defence. The only good things known to him in the entire universe are food, a female and repose. The only misfortunes he fears are pain and hunger.'

*"I do not believe that.*

"Rousseau says:

"Man's imagination depicts nothing to him; his heart asks nothing of him. He has neither foresight nor curiosity. . . . The spectacle of Nature has become indifferent to him by reason of its familiarity. . . . His mind, which nothing can excite, is given up to the single question of a bare existence, without thought of the future. On the other hand, in the primitive state, without house or hut or property of

<sup>1</sup> Translation by Norwood Young. *The Growth of Napoleon.*

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any kind each one took up his lodging by chance and often for one night only; males and females united fortuitously according to chance meeting, to opportunity, to desire. . . . They separated with equal ease; the mother suckled the children at first from her own need, then, habit having made them dear to her, she nourished them afterwards for their own sakes, and since there was hardly any possible means of finding each other when once lost to view they soon came to the situation of not being able to recognize each other.'

*"I do not believe a word of this.*

"Rousseau says:

"Let us assume that, wandering in the forests, without speech, without home, without war and without connexions, without need for the society of his fellows as without desire to hurt them, perhaps even without the power of recognizing any individual among them, savage man with few passions. . . .'

*"I do not believe a word of that.*

"MY OWN REFLECTIONS UPON THE NATURAL STATE.

"I think that man has never been a wanderer, isolated, without connexions, without need of his fellows. I believe, on the contrary, that, having emerged from infancy and arrived at the age of adolescence, man felt the need of his fellows, that he became united to a woman and selected a cave which had to be the centre of his movements, his refuge in storms and during the night, his magazine of pro-

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visions. This union was strengthened by custom and by the tie of children; but it could be broken at will. I think that, two savages having met in their enterprises, are likely to have recognized one another and displayed friendship at this second meeting, and to have felt the desire to live near one another. . . . Thus a colony was formed naturally.

"I think this colony lived happily because it had abundant food, protection from the seasons, necessities of good quality, enjoyment of feeling and of natural religion. I think that the world, during a great number of centuries, was divided in this way into colonies, separated and hostile and few in number. Afterwards the colonies increased in number and were compelled to come into some sort of relation with one another. From that time forward the earth could not support them without cultivation; consequently the idea of property and social relations came into existence.

"Exchanges began to be made. Wealth and taste followed. Imagination then emerged from the cave in which it had been a prisoner. Self-love, impetuous domination and pride arose and there were men of ambition with their pale tint who seized upon the direction of affairs and young rascals of florid hue who kissed women and ran after courtesans.

"My object is not to expound the series of changes through which man has passed before coming to the social state but only to show that he could never have lived as a solitary wanderer without home, without human contacts, without any other desire than that male and female should unite furtively, according to

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opportunity, chance or impulse. Why do we assume that man, in a state of Nature, ate food? Because there is no instance of a man who has existed in any other way. I think that, in a state of Nature, man felt and reasoned. He must have made use of these faculties, for there is no example of a man having existed without having made use of them. . . .

“To feel is the need of the heart, just as to eat is the need of the body. To feel is to be attached to someone, to love. From love proceed appreciation, veneration, respect. . . . If it had been otherwise, if it was true to say that in man feeling and reason are not inherent in the individual, but are only products of society, there could be no natural feeling or natural reason, no need of virtue, no happiness in virtue.”

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flict ruin upon all producers. Ruined producers cannot pay taxes. And they are apt to believe evil of those to whom the taxes are payable, especially when the newspapers assure them that such beliefs are well founded.

Finance, however, has always screened itself behind politics. Necker, the penniless promise-lender was not seen by the French people. They saw only Necker the Liberal, honest and good man, who had no ambition except to rescue them from their oppressors. The King knew better. But he had no understanding of financial method. Simple as was Necker's secret, it was hidden completely from him.

This secret, let it be repeated, was what is known to-day as the credit system. Necker actually possessed very little money; but he had mastered the art of lending promises to pay money in such a manner that the fulfilment of his promises was seldom or ever required of him. His notes of hand, in other words, were accepted instead of money because it was everywhere believed that he was a man of great substance. These notes of hand were lent by him; the borrowers had to deposit securities in the form of titles to real wealth. Consequently Necker was "buying" gold and silver, lands, houses, crops, anything and everything with nothing more substantial than his signature. The nature of this business will be understood if it is recalled that the person who, in the first instance, creates *de novo* any form of paper-money, whether bank-notes or bonds or IOU's, must necessarily obtain goods for nothing. He alone can obtain money without working for it.

More important still, he can, by virtue of his power as a creator of money, supply or withhold buying power

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at his pleasure, and can thus, as has been said, influence the prices of goods upwards or downwards. Necker and his associates knew how to manipulate all the markets of France, and could, in consequence, bring the strongest pressure to bear on the King, whose revenue depended on these markets. If the bankers were not obtaining their demands a terrible stringency fell upon the whole realm. Stringency continued until the demands of the bankers were conceded.

It has often been argued that these calamities were not really the fault of the bankers but were inherent in the credit system itself, and this used to be accepted as the bankers' complete justification. To-day, long and bitter experience has taught all those capable of profiting by it that the alleged justification is no justification at all. It is true, certainly, that a system whereby a man promises to pay what he does not possess cannot survive any considerable demand for payment. But the inference which ought to be drawn is not that demands for payment should be prevented but that the system should be changed.

Necker and his friends were concerned to set up a political system in France which should guarantee them against demands for payment—namely, the system of constitutional Monarchy. This system, in England, had taken "the power of the purse" from the King and vested it in the Parliament. Parliament had at once handed over the power to the bankers of the City of London, who were thus enabled not only to create promises to pay what they did not possess, but also to protect themselves against demands for the fulfilment of their promises. Necker had a branch office in London

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which his partner, Thelusson, managed. He had often visited England and was convinced that "the English system" as he called it, was perfect. It may or may not have crossed his mind that the English system had been established over the decapitated body of a King.

King Louis had no illusions about the political aims of his Finance Minister. He prepared to resist these aims just as, in the preceding century, King Charles I had resisted. But resistance had scarcely begun before the King of France discovered that he was without effective means. The attack on Christianity, by which the Church had been induced or forced to tolerate usury had shaken the faith of Europe and so opened the way to philosophers, many of whom were friends or associates of Necker. These philosophers, as has been said, were teaching Frenchmen a new religion. Nobody believed any longer in the mission of Kings. The bankers' Press, indeed, had effected a complete separation of King and People and had distorted the doctrine that a King represents his people and consequently, in a Christian land, is partaker of their consecration as Christians, into a ridiculous "divine right." Damaging comparison was made between "Divine Right" and that "Natural Right" about which everyone was talking. All the engines of publicity and propaganda belonged to the financiers, and all were used unscrupulously. Thus, the articles and speeches about the shocking extravagance of Versailles omitted reference to the fact that the palace was the seat of Government, where 20,000 civil servants were at work.

Necker financed the grain trade. He saw to it that, while his newspapers were attacking the Throne, the

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people of Paris should taste the pangs of hunger. Then, as good Samaritan, he supplied loaves to some needy families. Bad harvests favoured his designs. The King's revenue diminished; national bankruptcy threatened. Louis was compelled to summon the States General or Parliament of the Nation in order to obtain the means of carrying on his Government. It was this body which Necker meant to transform into a House of Lords and House of Commons on the English model.

But the banker reckoned without Mirabeau,<sup>1</sup> a scallywag nobleman who had suddenly, and rather unconvincingly, espoused what was now known as "the People's Cause" (to distinguish it from the cause of the King—just as "Natural Right" was distinguished from "Divine Right"). Mirabeau was a big man with an impressive knowledge of his fellow-countrymen. He was possessed of an excellent power of oratory, facile emotions, a cool and sober judgment. Several constituencies elected him because his peers would have nothing to do with him. He came to Versailles with the reputation of a dangerous radical. But the first sight of Necker froze his enthusiasm. Necker's smug piety made him choke. The Tribune of the People, from that hour, began to take stock of his politics. He set himself, very soon, to defeat the banker's plan for introducing the English constitution into France. Step by step, and reluctantly, he came to the view that the only way to defeat Necker was to reunite King and People.

That this was a just reading of the situation is proved

<sup>1</sup> The position of Mirabeau in the matter of biography is not unlike that of Necker. There are many works about him, but there is room, ample room, for more.



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by the extraordinary care which Necker exerted to prevent such a reunion. In fact, however, Mirabeau was as impotent to help the King as the King was impotent to help himself, and for the same reason—namely, as has been said, that the system of Monarchy by which and through which the People had achieved control of privilege and wealth was broken to its foundations.

The full extent of the ruin was made apparent for the first time when King Louis again dismissed Necker and sent him into exile. The banker crossed the Belgian frontier. Next day the Parisians tore down the Bastille,<sup>1</sup> the royal prison in the heart of Paris, and stripped the trees in the Tuileries gardens of their leaves in order to wear "Necker cockades"—green being the colour of the banker's livery. Louis had to surrender and send messengers to his exiled Minister (who had travelled meanwhile back to Switzerland), begging him to return. Paris, and all France, welcomed Necker as if he had saved the fatherland from overwhelming calamity. A few weeks later, a mob of drunken women, all of whom seemed to be well supplied with money, marched out to Versailles and, after threatening the Queen's life, brought King and Queen back with them to Paris. The King was now the banker's prisoner. Necker set about the task of introducing his new constitution, and would certainly have accomplished it had not Mirabeau once again attacked him.

Necker was virtual dictator. He had defeated the

<sup>1</sup> The history of the taking of the Bastille is full of lacunæ. Carlyle's account is good reading: not much more. Thiers' account is coloured by Thiers' political opinions. The best recent comments on the event are by Madelin in *The Revolutionaries*.

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King in open conflict. He had attached the People to himself. He was surrounded by a party of noblemen, politicians and writers, most of whom were sincere believers in Liberty and the Rights of Man. Mirabeau also had his party, the extreme radicals, who stood for equality and fraternity. Battle was joined on the issue of the national debt—in other words, on the question whether or not private bankers' credit (promises to pay) was to form the basis of the monetary system. The Assembly, on the motion of the Bishop of Autun, Talleyrand, had seized the lands of the Church. Necker proposed that these lands should be made over to himself as security for a new loan of IOU's.<sup>1</sup> Mirabeau asked why the Government should not create its own money and thus avoid paying interest on the banker's loan. That Mirabeau had a clear understanding of Necker's methods is shown by his question: "Why should the State lend to itself?" Nor did the banker's assertion that only he and his fellow-financiers possessed genuine money convince the Tribune, who knew that, in fact, Necker possessed almost no money. These Church lands, Mirabeau argued, were real wealth. Consequently they had value, and money could be created and issued against them without the help of any banker. Necker's reply was that this would be inflation, seeing that the new money would not be redeemable in gold or silver.

"It will be redeemable," answered Mirabeau, "in land."

The banker asserted that lack of convertibility into the precious metals must shake public confidence in any

<sup>1</sup> Harris' work on the *assignats*, and chapters in R. G. Hawtrey's works give some account of these transactions.

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money and thus lead to hoarding of the metals and so to ultimate debasement of the Government's paper. People, he declared, would fear "land-money," and would not part with their silver or gold in exchange for it. They would hide away their silver and gold and thus seriously reduce the total quantity of money in circulation. The prices of farm goods would fall, seeing that buying power would be reduced proportionately to the reduction in the quantity of money. Thus the Government, in order to raise prices again to economic levels, would be compelled to issue more "land-money," and the "land money" would soon cease, in consequence, to be redeemable in anything. It would become worthless because nobody would part with goods in exchange for it—in other words, prices as measured in the "land-money" would rise to incredible heights.

These arguments convinced the deputies, and Necker's plan was adopted. The banker was thus put in possession of large tracts of the most fertile land in France. He obtained this land as security for his promises to pay gold and silver which, in fact, he did not possess. These promises, in the form of bank-notes, were then issued by the Government to the public. Unhappily for Necker the public did not like the look of them. Those who received them made haste to convert them into silver or gold. Within a few weeks what was virtually a run on the banker had begun.

People, in other words, were demanding <sup>1</sup> that Necker

<sup>1</sup> A great deal of obscurity exists about the exact manner of Necker's downfall and exit, and it is obvious that careful efforts were made to gloss over the painful event. Most historians scarcely deign to mention the subject. But it is obvious that the fall of a man who, a year before, had been the Nation's idol must have occasioned great interest—to say the least of it.

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should make good in actual gold or silver his promises to pay gold or silver. The fact that he possessed little or no gold or silver was now immediately made manifest. He had to confess that he could not meet the demands being made and likely to be made upon him. In a moment the illusion of his wealth was shattered and he was exposed as a confidence trickster. He fled the country to escape arrest and, on his way, was roughly handled by the same people who, a year before, had worshipped him as saviour. Mirabeau, who had conducted the work of exposure, became dictator in his stead.

Mirabeau's first act was to issue the "land-money." His eloquence and his popularity got it accepted, and the "assignats," as the money was called, went everywhere into circulation. The Tribune had now only one object—namely, to reunite King and people and so, as he hoped, re-establish government on its ancient foundations. Mirabeau deserves, certainly, the title of statesman, even of great statesman. But his statesmanship was not great enough to cope with the difficulties which beset him. He saw in the estrangement of King and People only a temporary overclouding of the political sky. The King, he argued, was still beloved and respected by the great majority of Frenchmen; nothing but a misunderstanding, fostered by Necker and his journalists, stood in the way of reconciliation. Thus, the truth that the monarchical system was smitten by fatal disease was hidden from him. Mirabeau was not even titularly a Christian.

He believed in the new gods, Reason and Rights and Beauty, and had served them all. The monarchy which

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he wished to establish was not the Monarchy that had fallen at Versailles. He urged the King, in a series of private letters, to put himself at the head of the Revolution. This was tantamount to urging that the King should become a party leader, and should rely for support on himself, Mirabeau, and on those who shared his views. Mirabeau's offer is said to have won King Louis' approval, but that remains unconfirmed. The King did not accept it.

It is idle, no doubt, to speculate on what the consequences of acceptance might have been, but the temptation to do so is great at a moment when parties and their leaders, transformed into crude dictatorships, are so much in evidence. Mirabeau, it is reasonable to suppose, might have sustained the throne of France on some form of propaganda: but he could not have preserved a throne so supported from attacks by other parties and factions. In the end, therefore, the King would have been forced to suppress all those who opposed him on pain of being himself destroyed. In order to accomplish that end he would have been forced to make terms with money-lenders, who alone could have supplied him with the means of conducting civil war.

Louis XVI. to his honour, refused to effect so great a change in the nature of his office. He chose, instead, to go on playing, however ineffectively, the part of father of his people. Mirabeau fell sick, and died in the presence of Talleyrand and to the strains of violins, as befitted an adherent of the New Paganism. King Louis and his family tried to escape out of France, that course seeming to offer the best hope of avoiding civil disturbance. The King was recognized and arrested

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outside of the town of Varennes; he was brought back under guard to Paris.

Napoleon's part in these events was that of a subaltern officer in a distant garrison town. Most of the information which reached him was garbled, and the construction put upon that information, in consequence, false. The King's flight, for example, was ascribed to a plot by which Austrian bayonets were to be made use of to deprive the People of its Rights. The fact that Marie Antoinette was an Austrian made this story convincing. Fear of the Queen, indeed, spread all over the land and evoked a frenzy of hatred.

The newspapers fanned both fear and frenzy. Mirabeau's death and the King's flight had put an end to the possibility that a dictatorship of the Right might emerge from the Revolution. The Constitutional party, of which before his fall Necker had been the leader, consequently came into power once more. Necker's daughter, Madame de Staël, wife of the Swedish Ambassador, was the chief influence in this party. She was convinced of the supreme wisdom of her father's policy, and set about, at once, the task of compelling the King to accept the "Constitution"—that is to say, the English system. The King, in other words, was to give what remained of his authority to the money-lenders' party; in exchange he would be permitted to reign but not to govern. The People, for its part, would be permitted to elect "enlightened" noblemen and commons as their governors. Necker, in Switzerland, gave this plan his blessing. But, once again, the King resisted what was evidently an attempt to make him a party leader. Louis was still respected by a number of his subjects, and his

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influence, therefore, though sadly diminished, remained. Success without him was so unlikely that great efforts were expended to make him change his mind. The Constitutionals mingled threats with cajolery. When it became quite obvious that this policy would not succeed, Madame de Staël and some of her friends actually got into touch with the Duke of Brunswick<sup>1</sup> and made him a tentative offer of the throne of France if he would march, in alliance with the French, against the Austrians. At the same time they advertised that the King's reluctance to accept the position of a constitutional sovereign was a sign of his secret determination to recover his absolute power.

It was this misrepresentation of the King's conduct which made the most impression upon Napoleon's mind. The young Corsican could not, even as an officer of the French army, forget or forgive the conquest of Corsica by the Bourbons. Had France, too, been conquered by them in the same fashion? He hated monarchy, as has been said, with the unreasoning hatred of the clansman towards a system based upon rank rather than upon kinship. His hatred was quickened by reason of the fact that it had become the fashion in France—since the eclipse of Versailles—to praise Corsica. His native island had now been made an integral part of France on equal terms, and Mirabeau, speaking of the Corsicans, had actually declared in a public speech:

“These men fought for liberty just as we are fighting for liberty.”

These words of Mirabeau had exerted a profound

<sup>1</sup> This story is well authenticated, though it is based, necessarily, on circumstantial evidence (see the writer's *Germaine de Staël*).

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effect on the son of Carlo Buonaparte. Napoleon was home on leave when he read them, helping his widowed mother in her heavy task of bringing up a large family of young children on a small income. He and his mother had made a flag and hoisted it above their house. It bore the words:

“Long live the Nation. Long live Paoli.  
Long live Mirabeau.”

The Buonapartes from this hour had been heart and soul for the Revolution. Napoleon had put away all his hatred of the French people. When Paoli returned to Corsica, after having been honoured in Paris, on his journey from London, he had hailed him as the chief of the captains of liberty. That had been a happy day for personal as well as for public reasons. For he had just received a letter from the Abbé Raynal<sup>1</sup> to whom he had submitted his *History of Corsica*. Raynal stated that he had sent the manuscript to Mirabeau, who had replied, “this little history seems to announce a genius of the first rank.”

<sup>1</sup> Norwood Young in his *Growth of Napoleon* gives many interesting details about Napoleon's relations with Raynal.



## CHAPTER IV

### EARTHQUAKE

THE National Assembly had shown its confidence in Paoli by making him virtual commander of Corsica. But it had soon become apparent that this gesture had not extinguished the vendetta in the old man's heart. Paoli hated the French, whether royalist or revolutionary; he hated revolutions. It was his secret plan to hand Corsica over to the English, who had given him asylum, and so, as he believed, to achieve the virtual independence of the island.

He discovered that, in the execution of this purpose, he would meet with a stout opposition from the French revolutionary party, at the head of which was the Buonaparte family. He had already re-established his old friendly relations with that family and had told Napoleon on one occasion :

“You are cast in the ancient mould; you are one of Plutarch's men ”;

but doubt and suspicion, nevertheless, existed between them.

After Paoli's return to Corsica Napoleon had gone back to his regiment, taking his brother Louis with him in order to educate the lad and save his mother expense. His return coincided with the flight of the King and Queen from Paris. When the news of the flight reached

## EARTHQUAKE

Valence, Napoleon went to a meeting of the local revolutionary club and took the oath to be "faithful to the Nation and the Law."

Many of his brother-officers had refused to take this oath and had resigned their commissions. The Corsican was, therefore, pledged definitely to the service of the People, as opposed to that of the King. He began to take part in political activity and to speak at public meetings. Never was revolutionary more zealous or more completely assured of the righteousness of his cause. "The Southern blood which flows in my veins," he wrote to a friend, "rushes with the swiftness of the Rhone."

King Louis, meanwhile, was giving the Constitutionalists a great deal of anxiety. Many of these, as has been said, were nobles. But the party contained also rich merchants, philosophers and writers. If the King had been ready to become the instrument of this faction it is probable that he could have retained his royal title, for the Constitutionalists were possessed of immense financial resources both inside and outside of France. It was their money which had paid the mob-masters, and provided the means of organized violence. With the King at their head they would have crushed all opposition, rallied the law-abiding and loyal elements in France and thus brought the period of trouble to an end—for there would in that case have been no foreign invasion to complicate the issue. The French would have been persuaded by a show of representative government that they had achieved the control of their own destiny without destroying the ancient structure of government.

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Valence, Napoleon went to a meeting of the local revolutionary club and took the oath to be "faithful to the Nation and the Law."

Many of his brother-officers had refused to take this oath and had resigned their commissions. The Corsican was, therefore, pledged definitely to the service of the People, as opposed to that of the King. He began to take part in political activity and to speak at public meetings. Never was revolutionary more zealous or more completely assured of the righteousness of his cause. "The Southern blood which flows in my veins," he wrote to a friend, "rushes with the swiftness of the Rhone."

King Louis, meanwhile, was giving the Constitutionalists a great deal of anxiety. Many of these, as has been said, were nobles. But the party contained also rich merchants, philosophers and writers. If the King had been ready to become the instrument of this faction it is probable that he could have retained his royal title, for the Constitutionalists were possessed of immense financial resources both inside and outside of France. It was their money which had paid the mob-masters, and provided the means of organized violence. With the King at their head they would have crushed all opposition, rallied the law-abiding and loyal elements in France and thus brought the period of trouble to an end—for there would in that case have been no foreign invasion to complicate the issue. The French would have been persuaded by a show of representative government that they had achieved the control of their own destiny without destroying the ancient structure of government.

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This is what had already taken place in England, where the Royal House of Hanover, owing to its dependence on Parliament, was in leading-strings to a faction composed of nobles and bankers. The English system, as Necker had perceived, was a dictatorship of finance cleverly disguised as a "crowned republic." At first glance it seemed to satisfy every requirement of a liberalism careful of tradition; actually the parties were puppets of a Money Power which, having obtained the right to create private credit, could dispense plenty or inflict scarcity at its pleasure. Tory and Whig, indeed, were empty names behind which the real "party" screened its operations. England was neither monarchy nor republic, Conservative nor Liberal; she was the private estate of an oligarchy not unlike that of the City-state of Venice, by which and through which all her public officers from the King downwards—though King George III had done his best to escape—lived and worked. This Oligarchy, as has been said, controlled money; it controlled the Press; it controlled the funds of both the great political parties. Thus it was in command of the whole patronage of the Crown on the one hand, and of the whole body of political patronage on the other. It had shown itself both generous and terrible. Englishmen, for the most part, were unaware of its existence, so cleverly were its operations screened behind the activities of popular leaders who continued to assert that they were the guardians of liberty. In fact, liberty was being whittled down. Parliament had recently passed the Enclosure Acts, by which the whole yeoman class had been brought into subservience and transformed into agricultural labourers. Cobbett's

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writings exist to prove, however, that some Englishmen saw through the sham and realized that their country was, in fact, in the grasp of an iron dictatorship.

It would be imputing too much political wisdom to King Louis XVI to say that his opposition to the Money party in France was due to a clear understanding of the position in England. Louis acted rather in accordance with instincts which, as the event is showing to-day both in Europe and in America, were sound. In spite of every effort to win him over, he continued to refuse support to any party.

The threat of a war with Austria was immediately launched against him by Madame de Staël, her lover, Louis de Narbonne, the Minister of War, and the rest of the Government; and insults and challenges of a wholly outrageous kind were flung at the Queen's brother, the Emperor, who, it was declared without a shadow of proof, was making ready to invade France in order to restore the absolute power of his brother-in-law. Not even the sudden death of the Emperor brought this shameless campaign to an end. France, as has been seen, was lashed into a frenzy of rage and fear by the bankers' Press, which declared, day after day, that invasion was certain.

The King saw the trap. So, curiously enough, did Robespierre, who perceived that, if war was declared, the party of the extreme left, to which he belonged, would share the King's fate. Louis, displaying an excellent courage, for he was virtually a prisoner, dismissed Narbonne and refused to make war.

But this bold action, though it unseated the Constitutionalists, did not restore power to the Throne. The

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propaganda had been too thorough and far reaching. Refusal to go to war with Austria was construed everywhere as a tacit confession that the charges of conspiracy with the Emperor were well founded. The war fever swept over France and, by strange irony, carried to power the most pacific of all the political parties. This was the faction of the Gironde, so-called, because many of its members came from the district of Bordeaux. It consisted of well-to-do merchants, professional men, economists, educationalists and writers, and it was informed by a conspicuously high degree of liberal idealism. The name of Condorcet is guarantee enough of that.<sup>1</sup> This party was republican in feeling, but cherished no absolute hostility to monarchy on the one hand, nor to finance on the other. Its members believed in the essential goodness of human nature, taking up, in this respect, the position of Socrates rather than that of Plato or of the Stoics. Their minds were full of projects for the enlightenment of their fellow-citizens, and so for the ushering in of the reign of Reason and Beauty. They subscribed, unreservedly, to the declaration of the Rights of Man. Since they were opposed to all forms of violence, they relied on persuasion and kindness to achieve their objects.

The business men among these good people had many associations with the money-lenders and, indeed, were often bankers themselves in a small way. They believed, consequently, that finance was a powerful weapon with which to attack and defeat the tyranny that they sup-

<sup>1</sup> Condorcet's last work, his famous "Sketch" of the ideal State, remains a deeply moving work. This high-souled man completely misunderstood the nature of the Revolution.

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posed resided in the King's office. Their hostility to the Constitutionalists was based not on financial but on political grounds. The Girondists did not relish the prospect of the setting up in France of a House of Peers on the English model. They were single-chamber men, convinced that if only expression could be given to the national will that will would prove itself a worthy guide. They wished, therefore, not to mend the Monarchy but to end it, and this desire, unavowed as yet, made them deeply suspicious of the King. It quickened their fears that he might succeed, with the help of Austria, in crushing and destroying them. This was the popular attitude. The Girondists demanded war in order, as they said, that the principles of the Revolution might not be trodden underfoot. They demanded that the King should support them in this policy.

Louis resisted. Popular clamour immediately became so greatly intensified as to threaten the disruption of the State. He yielded; and the Parisians cheered him. War against Austria was declared, and the French army was set in motion. The Duke of Brunswick, in despite of the offers made to him by the Constitutionalists, at once joined forces with the Emperor, and the French were beaten and driven back. Austrian and Prussian armies began to threaten the capital. Inevitably the anger and fear of the Parisians became focused on the Royal Family.

A new element—namely, panic—was now imported into the political crisis. Necker, in his heyday, had appeared with his hands full of gifts—liberty and rights. Mirabeau, too, had brought gifts—a new world skilfully engrafted on the stem of the old. The Constitutionalists



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had promised prosperity as well as liberty; the Girondists had promised social services and new standards of living. These bidders for popular support had, each and all, represented themselves as vehicles and exponents of the People's will. The People wanted liberty; the People wanted votes; the People wanted bread or wine or better clothes or education or amusement. No matter, Necker and Mirabeau, the Constitutionals and the Girondists knew how to satisfy each and all of these desires. Like bookmakers on a racecourse they had shouted the odds, outbidding and outbellowing each other. And over them all had lain the same mist of speculation: what, in fact, did the People want? What was the People?

And now, suddenly, in face of the advancing armies, enlightenment had been vouchsafed. What the People wanted was safety, deliverance, leadership, somebody who would enrol and train armies, who would purge France of the enemies she harboured within her own bosom. The Girondists shrank back in terror from this People. In terror they began to bait the King with demands to which they ought to have known that he would not accede; for example, that the clergy should be forced to break their vows by taking the new oath. Louis displayed again the courage which had never forsaken him. In face of a snarling populace he refused to do violence to his conscience. His Ministers passed from threats to pleadings. Surely he must see the necessity of convincing the Parisians that he had renounced the old order? Let him show that Austria, and all that Austria stood for, was his enemy. Otherwise they could not answer any longer for his safety. The King would not yield. They summoned mobs to

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threaten him in his palace. He went to meet the leaders of the mobs and talked to them gently during several hours, taking wine with them, though they had come prepared to murder him and his wife and children. When the news went out over France it evoked a shiver of sympathy for this brave man, which found expression in hundreds of addresses and letters.

One of these letters, as it happened, came from the island of Corsica, from the mother of Napoleon. It came belatedly, it is true, and more as an expression of thanks than of sympathy, but it indicated, nevertheless, that sympathy existed in quarters where its presence might not have been expected. Napoleon's mother had shared the enthusiasm of her sons for Mirabeau and the Assembly; but as she had no part in the fears by which the Continent was vexed, her opposition to monarchy was academic and tepid. For the King himself, who had received her and her husband graciously at his Court, she felt nothing but sympathy. Her mind, busy with Corsican affairs and with the grave dangers which threatened her sons, was empty of rancour.

## CHAPTER V

### FOUNDATIONS OF STATESMANSHIP

THE Buonapartes had need of their mother's watchfulness, for their enemies, in Ajaccio and throughout Corsica, were multiplying from day to day. Paoli's return to the island, far from having brought peace and liberty, had, as has been said, divided the people into two parties—namely, those who, like himself, wanted independence under the protection of England, and those who desired to remain within the body of the new France. Paoli's position was difficult, because there were large numbers of French troops in the island and he was, nominally, an official of the French Government. He found it necessary to work in secret for the objects he had in view. It became the business of the Buonapartes to discover these secret plans, and so to convict him of treachery. The chief obstacle in their way was the authority with which the Revolutionists in Paris, in their enthusiasm, had invested him. Paoli was a French officer, holding the highest rank in the island. Consequently Napoleon, who was also a French officer, was under his orders.

This difficulty became more menacing when Napoleon managed to secure the post of Colonel of the newly-raised Corsican Volunteers, a body modelled on the French National Guard. It was Paoli's intention to capture the Volunteers for England, or, failing that, to

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disband them; Napoleon was determined to hold them for France. Both worked secretly, but Paoli's cunning excelled that of his opponent. The Volunteers became involved in a series of brawls which culminated in a free fight between them and those citizens of Ajaccio who were hostile to the Revolution. Several people were killed. Paoli denounced Napoleon to the French authorities as a firebrand who had acted without orders and whose lack of restraint had put a severe strain on Corsican loyalty. The young officer was summoned to Paris to answer for his behaviour. He was acquitted.

It was the news of this acquittal which had caused his mother to write to the King, for the good woman supposed that King Louis must have interested himself personally in her son's career. Napoleon knew better. He had been living in the capital for some weeks and was aware that the King's power was extinguished. He wandered about the town, seeing and examining everything. He observed that Paris, like Ajaccio, was full of plots and plotters. Every plotter, here as in Corsica, declared that he was acting on the People's behalf. And every plotter had his mob of hired assassins, ready, at a hint, to attack his enemies. There seemed to be plenty of money about to pay these rascals, but nobody knew who was supplying the money.

"Paris is in the most violent convulsions," he wrote to his brother Joseph. "It is full of foreigners and there are great numbers of roughs. The town has been kept lighted the last three nights."

He mixed with the crowds which surged about the streets, but maintained a complete detachment. His future as an officer was doubtful on account of the

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trouble in Corsica, and he was desperately short of money, so much so that he had pawned his watch and other personal belongings. His chief concern was to obtain the arrears of his pay, which had been stopped pending the inquiry into his conduct. The crowds disquieted and repelled him. He witnessed the entry of the mob into the King's palace on June 20, 1792, and could not contain his astonishment at the spectacle.

"Why have they allowed these brutes to get in?" he demanded of his friend Bourrienne.<sup>1</sup> "They ought to have shot down five or six hundred of them with cannon. The others would soon have taken to their heels."

Next day he wrote to Joseph:

"It's all highly irregular and constitutes a most dangerous example. One wonders what will become of the French Empire if such monstrous happenings continue."

What did it mean? What was going on behind this façade of horror? By whose orders were these mobs unleashed? His struggle with Paoli had taught Napoleon that where there is a mob there is, also, a mob-master, and that what are called by the uninitiated spontaneous movements of the People are calculated moves of undisclosed gamesters. France, clearly, was changing hands. Into whose hands was she passing?

Exactly the same question vexed the mind of the Government. The Girondist party, as has been said, consisted of honest merchants and idealists whose hope it had been speedily to make a new world. The old

<sup>1</sup> Bourrienne : *Memoirs*.

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world, unhappily, displayed a lively resistance to their plans. While they debated, leaders of the Extreme Left, the advocate Danton and the attorney Robespierre, for example, filled Paris with denunciations of their ineptitude. France was invaded. Was the Government unable to save the country? Let a beginning be made by hunting down the traitors in high places—the King, for example, and the Queen.

The Girondists had proposed to rule by persuasion. A sweet reasonableness had been their prescription for the ills of the State. They saw, suddenly, bared teeth and glaring eyes, madmen divided between greed and fear. They saw, too, the national money, Mirabeau's *assignats*, losing value from day to day. Nobody, it seemed, trusted them. Farmers would not exchange wheat and meat for the famous "land-money" because the basis of that money was the Government's credit, the belief that it could safeguard France against the invader without and the mob-master within. That belief was shaken. The good men of the Gironde lost their nerve. Paris would starve unless the farmers sold bread and meat; Paris would be occupied by the Prussians and Austrians unless Frenchmen rallied to the defence of their country.

Napoleon marked this irresolution and noted its effects upon finance and politics. These Girondists were the faithful disciples of Greece and Rome? Was their philosophy mistaken? The young Corsican could not bring himself to make so damaging an admission, instead he expressed the view that the French were an ancient people which had temporarily got out of hand. The strong wine of liberty had gone to their heads.

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They needed leadership, discipline. The philosophers, after all, had not suggested that undisciplined mobs were fit to govern anybody.

But deeper than this reasoning lay a cool and shrewd power of observation. The truth was that France was afraid, not of the enemy so much as of her own defencelessness. The first glory of the new heaven and new earth had faded. The noble-minded and the selfish alike lay under the shadow of disappointment. Worse still, they saw danger and hardship ahead of them instead of the joys and satisfactions which all had expected.

The Stoic in Napoleon interpreted these signs as evidence of degeneracy. Those who did not know how to discipline themselves were not fit for liberty; those who expected to profit by her coming were not fit for liberty; those who hesitated in the enemy's face were not fit for liberty. He had gone to Versailles a few years earlier and had written about that visit:

"If I had to compare the time of Sparta and Rome with modern days, I should say: 'Love is sovereign here, but there the dominant feeling was love of country.' . . . Surely it is true that a people given up to gallantry has lost even the feeble energy required to enable a man to believe in patriotism. This is where we stand now; only a handful of folk anywhere believe in Patriotism. Think of all the books that have been written to show how absurd it is!"

He held the same views now that Versailles was empty and deserted.

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"Those who are at the head of affairs here," he wrote to his brother Lucien, "are poor creatures. When one sees events at close quarters one is forced to confess that the People is little worth the pains men take to win its favour. You know Ajaccio's recent history; that of Paris is exactly the same. Possibly, indeed, men here are even smaller-minded, less reputable, worse calumniators and more given to abusing one another. . . . When one sees events at close quarters one realizes that enthusiasm is no more than enthusiasm."

The scientific observer was at work, correcting the ideas of the visionary. Napoleon was finding himself, putting away theory in favour of ascertained fact, laying the foundation of statesmanship. On August 10, 1792, he witnessed the attack on the King's palace by which, finally, Louis was hurled from his throne.

"The palace," he stated at St Helena,<sup>1</sup> "was attacked by the vilest mobs. . . . After the King had surrendered himself to the Assembly I ventured to enter the Tuileries Garden. Never again did I get an impression so violent as that made upon me by the masses of the dead bodies of the Swiss Guard. Perhaps it was the narrow space which exaggerated the numbers. . . . I saw well-dressed women indulge in acts of the utmost indecency towards the corpses. I visited all the neighbouring cafés; everywhere passions were violent; rage was in all hearts; it was visible in every face, although these were very far from being the common people."

<sup>1</sup> Las Cases : *Memorial*.



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The common people, on the contrary, were still not unfriendly to the King. Napoleon retained all his life the belief, which he formed in face of the event, that if Louis XVI had mounted a horse and ridden out of the palace among the people, they would have rallied to him. Recognition of this probability was, perhaps, his first considerable step in statesmanship.

## CHAPTER VI

### DICTATOR'S DRUM

MONARCHY in France had been replaced by dictatorship. The King, until the last moment of his reign had kept faith with his people by refusing to become the leader of any party. He had upheld the essential principle of monarchy—namely, fatherhood. Whatever criticism may be sustained against Louis XVI it cannot be laid to his charge that he committed, as King, the sin of those fathers who take sides with one child against another.

Dictatorship, in other words, had failed to enlist him. To Necker, to Mirabeau, to the Constitutionals, to the Girondists his answer, unspoken, but proclaimed by his deeds, had been the same: "I am King and therefore the father of all my people; that my people have been alienated from me by those whose sole object it is to exploit them does not and cannot change the character of my office."

The importance of this resolute and heroic resistance has been grossly underestimated by historians. The fate of any particular Christian monarchy is an incident; Christian monarchy, as a principle, is valid from one generation to another. It is a system of government differing completely from all other systems so that, though thrones may be vacant, they do not cease to exist.

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During three terrible years of revolt and violence King Louis maintained his office unsullied. He tried in these years, as he had tried earlier in his reign, to bring relief to his people and to afford them comfort. The parties which attacked him while his power lasted were dealt with gently and even generously. Their leaders went about unscathed and wrote and spoke freely. Their newspapers circulated all over France. When his power was at an end Louis risked his life in the defence of humble priests who, for conscience sake, refused to perjure themselves. Those who accused him of being in secret league with the Austrians, forgot that, to the last, he had opposed a declaration of war. Those, again, who saw in an apparent mingling of weakness and strength proof that the King was unfit to rule, displayed misunderstanding of the nature of kingship. Fatherhood does not trample under nor suppress; but it is bold to defend the weak against the strong. Fatherhood suffers but does not seek to exact vengeance. Above all it will not exchange loyalty for the dominion of greed or fear, because there is laid upon it, in times evil as in prosperous times, a duty of sacrifice.

It is otherwise with dictatorship. Every dictatorship, no matter what its form may seem to be, is the rule of a party or a faction. Of that party or faction the dictator is the instrument, not the master. Let him offend, he will be replaced. Dictatorship, consequently, proceeds in every case by repression and force. The party which has struggled to power seeks first of all to weaken or destroy its opponents so that its power may remain to it. It restrains freedom of speech, of writing, even of action; it assassinates its critics; it denies to

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all except itself influence over public opinion. At the same time it is concerned to win over and hold the people by some positive policy. It seeks, with defiant drum and blare of trumpets to make them believe that it is their defender against a host of enemies, seen and unseen; it plays upon their passions of greed and fear, upon their vanity, their prejudices, their feelings of class and race. It flatters and cajoles and threatens by turns. And it exerts itself at all times to purge its own ranks of discontented or disaffected persons, so that no weakness may exist to jeopardize its existence.

These needs can no more be satisfied without money than they can be satisfied without force. The need for money, moreover, becomes more urgent the longer the dictatorship lasts, because enthusiasm, and the strength which it engenders, are wasting assets. If, for example, it was fear which made the dictatorship possible, the resolution of fear will mark the beginning of decline. Unless a motive of profit is now substituted, the party will lose cohesion. In the shadows behind every dictator, therefore, the money-lender skulks.

This is the more extraordinary from the fact that dictators commonly make beginning by denouncing financiers while financiers display, as a rule, a lively aversion from dictators. It is not necessary to suppose that either of these professions is insincere. Dictators are always men possessed of gifts of leadership; eager, public-spirited men with quickened senses; or stern men, believers in discipline and able to dragoon their fellows. Such men hold money-changers in contempt. The money-changers, for their part, have small liking for the

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kind of financial security which a party leader can offer. Constitutional democracy with its continually changing governments and its unchanging dependence on the money-market more nearly accords with their desire. But needs must when the Devil drives. Dominant parties prefer usury to oblivion or martyrdom; usurers prefer dictators to parliaments which have lost their nerve and are showing reluctance to take the bread from the mouths of the poor in order to balance their budgets, or which are trying to conduct their affairs by means of paper currencies.

On the morning of the 10th of August 1792 the Government of France was still vested in the House of Bourbon. On the following morning it was vested in the members of the Jacobin Club, amongst whom, curiously enough, the Girondists were still included. The Jacobins instantly set about making an end of their opponents, and with this object in view hunted the Constitutionals through the streets of Paris. Madame de Staël<sup>1</sup> hid as many of her friends as possible in her big house and managed to get some of them smuggled out of Paris. As the wife of the Swedish Ambassador she was in less danger than they were, but she was rough-handled, nevertheless, before she escaped to Switzerland. This man-hunt was accompanied by a swift suppression of all hostile opinion. The Jacobins declared that, by hurling the King from his throne, they had saved France. They added that Paris was full of enemies and traitors against whom the Sovereign People must now, and for the future, be protected by themselves. The prisons soon bulged with Frenchmen

<sup>1</sup> See Madame de Staël's *Considerations*.

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and Frenchwomen against whom charges of treason were made, but against whom the real charge was hostility to the Jacobins.

It is instructive, in these days, to observe how faithfully each of the modern dictatorships has followed the methods of 1792—which, again, bore some resemblance to the methods employed in England by the Roundheads. Dictatorship, as has been suggested, is a political system subject to definite and inflexible laws. The organism demands a particular kind of environment, just as living creatures demand conditions suited to their needs. Thus Bolshevists, Fascists and Nazis in turn adopted, in the twentieth century, the measures of repression and censorship which the Jacobins had adopted in the eighteenth and the Roundheads in the seventeenth. Nor is it probable that knowledge of history has exerted the smallest influence upon the modern dictators who, for that matter, with the exception of the Russians, are opposed to all the ideas of the Jacobins. Indeed, so completely independent is dictatorship, as a system of the avowed objects of any particular form of it, that it is possible to trace its history back to remote periods of time without discovering conspicuous differences of method. Baronial feudalism, for example, was the dictatorship of a body of fighting-men, and "Kings," until the eleventh century, were barons of barons. This is true even of Charlemagne. If a King (*i.e.* Party leader) offended the barons he was deposed or assassinated. The early Roman monarchy of the Tarquins was a kingship of exactly the same kind, and so, also, was the monarchy of the Cæsars. "Bread and circuses" and fear, then

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as now, were the methods adopted for controlling the populace.

In the case of the Jacobins bread was difficult to obtain; but a massacre organized in spectacular fashion supplied the necessary excitement. This took place in September 1792, three weeks after the deposition of the King.<sup>1</sup> A band of hired ruffians went forth daily from the Hotel de Ville in Paris to the prisons. A rough tribunal was set up in each case, and those who had been condemned were butchered as they stepped from the presence of their judges. So hysterical were the attending mobs that if, as occasionally happened, a prisoner was declared innocent, men and women took him in their arms and covered him with kisses.

This hideous "circus" was organized by the Revolutionary Commune—that is to say, by the masters of the Jacobin Club. Danton and Tallien were party to it, though both sought later to exculpate themselves. The excuse was offered to a terrified Chamber that, with the invader at the gate, an example was necessary; but the Chamber remained uncomfortable. Several members of the Government, which was still largely in the hands of the Girondists, though Danton had become a Minister, had learned that their names were on the list of the proscribed.

Napoleon was in Paris during the period of the September massacres, for, after the fall of the Monarchy, he had gone to St Cyr to protect his eldest sister, Elise, who was at school there, and to take her back to Corsica. They were detained in Paris until the massacres were

<sup>1</sup> *The September Massacres*, by Lenotre, is the fullest available account of this horror.

## Dictator's Drum

over. Napoleon had been reinstated in his command of the Corsican Volunteers and was anxious to return to the island, where, as he knew, Paoli's influence was growing every day. Would Corsica remain French? He was still strongly of opinion that this was the right policy for his countrymen, though his enthusiasm for the Revolution had cooled in face of the massacres.

"That dreadful event," he told Las Cases at St Helena,<sup>1</sup> "arose out of the force of circumstances and the spirit of the moment. No political change ever takes place unattended by popular fury; the people are never exposed to danger without committing disorders and sacrificing victims. . . . No social revolution ever takes place unaccompanied by violence."

Nevertheless he felt, as Louis XVI had felt, that an upheaval of some kind had been inevitable, because the system of monarchy had ceased to function. He no longer blamed the system of monarchy; he did not blame the people. He was groping in the dark towards knowledge and understanding. Why had monarchy ceased to function? What quality was it which distinguished monarchy from other forms of government? Where, in short, were the secret springs of a King's power? He could not answer these questions. He remained a Stoic; a believer in discipline. He thought that it was lack of discipline, or rather relaxation of discipline, which was the first cause of calamity. He addressed himself to the duty of saving Corsica for France.

<sup>1</sup> Las Cases : *Memorial*.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE STOIC

AN immediate result of the September massacres was a rise in the value of the paper-money <sup>1</sup>—that is to say, an increase in French “credit.” The rise coincided with Danton’s efforts to recruit Revolutionary armies and so stem the tide of invasion. Massacres and recruiting were accepted as pledges that the Jacobins meant to make an end of all their enemies. By the victory of the French arms at Valmy one of these pledges was handsomely fulfilled and the immediate danger to Paris removed.

The Jacobins now felt strong enough to purge themselves of their weaker brethren—namely, the Girondists. The fate of the King was immediately made the touchstone of virtue. No true patriot, Danton and Robespierre declared, could doubt that Louis by intriguing with Austria had betrayed France and so forfeited his life as well as his throne. The Girondists recoiled from the threat, for all their principles were opposed to extreme courses. But they were not suffered to escape, and few of them possessed enough courage to offer serious opposition. They voted publicly for the King’s death while deploring, in private, the policy which had condemned him.

<sup>1</sup> See the careful graphs given by Atarvis in his *The Assignats*. (Harvard University Press.)

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A party that has fallen into weakness is doomed already. Louis XVI suffered in January 1793; on the first of June of the same year Danton and his mob savaged the Girondists. The noble Condorcet and his friends were hunted to death like vermin. The government of France passed completely into the hands of the extremists. Danton was their leader. But behind him was the Committee of Public Security.<sup>1</sup> When he failed in the task he had undertaken he was replaced, immediately, by Robespierre and Carnot.

Napoleon, during this period of the Revolution, was at home in Corsica, fighting out with his brothers the issue between their family and Paoli—between, that is to say, those who wished to break with Revolutionary France and those who wished to adhere to her. It was an issue not peculiar, at that hour, to the islanders. All over France resentment against Paris and her Jacobins was finding expression in demands for a federal constitution by which large powers of self-government would be conferred upon the provinces and especially conferred upon the great provincial cities, Marseilles, Lyons, Bordeaux, Toulon.

The reason lay in the distrust of the Jacobins which the whole merchant class had begun to feel. The merchants, from the beginning, had supported the money-lenders in their opposition to the Throne. The wine-growers of Bordeaux and the silk merchants of Lyons and Marseilles enjoyed a large measure of foreign trade which had been opened up to them by bankers with international connexions. They looked upon these bankers, consequently, as their friends, and had hoped

<sup>1</sup> Not, as is usually said, the Committee of Public Safety.

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to see established in Paris either a constitutional monarchy on the English pattern or a liberal republic. They had cherished no hatred against King Louis personally, and were, for the most part, shocked and horrified by the news of his execution. In their eyes he had been partner, merely, in a system which they found irksome because it interfered with their trade and because it imposed on them a heavy burden of taxation. Much of this taxation had been payable to local noblemen and landowners against whom, in consequence, the merchants had felt great animosity, and from whose depredations they had looked to the bankers to protect them.

These merchants were far from seeing that each time a banker discounted one of their bills he was providing himself costlessly with a claim on their merchandise. Equally remote from their understanding was the fact that the taxes they paid, whether to King or noble, provided the interest on loans made to King or noble by the same bankers in the same costless way. The bankers, in other words, had played off one set of debtors against another set, in order to establish a system which would guarantee all their loans in perpetuity.

But the plan had miscarried. First the King, then the Girondists, who represented the merchants, had gone down before the Jacobin assault. Finance, in consequence, found itself compelled to organize a new resistance, this time against Paris and her masters. The revolts which took place all over France, as well as in Corsica, represented, therefore, an offensive by the Money Power against the Revolution which the Money Power had made. The offensive was carefully planned

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and effectively conducted. Lyons revolted and declared for King Louis' small son, "Louis XVII," who was imprisoned in the Temple; Bordeaux revolted; Marseilles revolted; the great naval base of Toulon was handed over by its inhabitants to the English and occupied by English and Spanish detachments. At the same time invading armies entered France from the North, the East and the South.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of Corsica at such a moment is obvious. If the island remained loyal to France, English operations before Toulon must be hampered seeing that the French fleet would possess a satisfactory base of operations; but if Corsica passed into English possession the English occupation of Toulon would be confirmed and supported. Napoleon's opposition to Paoli, therefore, was a service to the Jacobins of a vital kind. He was fully aware of this. It does not appear that he cherished much hope of ultimate success, but it is certain that he counted on so far delaying the enemy as to interfere seriously with the execution of his plans.

Napoleon, in other words, had adopted Jacobinism as his creed in spite of the horror excited in him by the September massacres. The choice seems to have been an instinctive one. The Corsican, as has been said, was a Stoic. He had witnessed in Paris scenes of violence which had shocked deeply his sense of discipline and order. What France needed above all things, he believed, was a strong hand. The new

<sup>1</sup> This plot furnishes an example of the thorough fashion in which the Masters of Money organize their blows. It refutes, emphatically, the easy-going idea that the existing monetary system grew up, accidentally, like a plant. On the contrary, it was evolved and perfected, and is now being defended by men of the highest capacity.

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spectacle of revolting towns in face of foreign invasion was so terrifying that almost any measure of repression seemed to be justified. Who, except the Jacobins, was capable of applying methods of repression? For, as he realized, loyalty had perished with the King, leaving only fear as the nation's cement.

Napoleon had brooded long over the failure of the Girondists to realize their dreams of liberty and peace and abundance. Why had these excellent and capable men crumpled up so suddenly under the burden of authority? Why had they allowed themselves to be driven by the extremists into such courses as the extermination of the Constitutionalists? Why had they omitted to take strong measures for the protection of the fatherland? Why, above all, had they allowed the King to be sacrificed? They had taught and believed that free men would rejoice to lay down their lives for their country, and that consequently the recognition of human rights was the beginning of patriotism. But the event had disproved their ideas. There had been wholesale desertions from the armies of liberty. Napoleon concluded again, as he had concluded in Paris, that men must be governed with firmness and held, all the time, in a strong discipline.

This was the conclusion which the Committee of Public Security in Paris had reached. The Jacobins professed to embody the Revolution; in fact, they had abandoned it from the first moment of their power. Force and fear were their weapons, and even Danton<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Belloc's lives of *Danton* and *Robespierre* richly repay study. The writer does not in either case accept the conclusions offered, but he acknowledges a heavy burden of debt.

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had proved too gentle in the use of these weapons. Was it true, then, the Corsican asked himself, that men can be governed only by greed or by fear—by greed in quiet times, by fear in moments of crisis? He faced the ugly question and answered it boldly. It was not true. History remained the story of heroes and wise men. The Girondists had fallen because they were merchants and tradesmen using the name of liberty as a cloak for their acquisitiveness. The same men were engaged now in opening their gates to foreign enemies, lest their customers be lost to them. Napoleon had followed the debate between Necker and Mirabeau. As a Corsican, he knew something of the ubiquitous trade of England and of the influence exerted upon that trade by the merchant bankers of the City of London. The revolting burghers of Lyons and Marseilles and Bordeaux were playing the English game as surely as Paoli was playing it, and for much the same reason—namely, to maintain relations, trading and other, with London.

It was true that Paoli professed a lively patriotism and called the past to his witness. But where was the difference between handing over Corsica to the English and holding her to her French allegiance? Corsica had accepted voluntarily a place in the body of France and Paoli himself had confirmed that union. Had France broken faith with the islanders? Nevertheless when the Committee in Paris ordered Paoli's arrest Napoleon defended him in a letter to the French Government that might easily have cost him his life. This letter was written before the Buonapartes learned that a member of their family, Lucien, who was in France, had denounced their father's old chief to the Revolutionary leaders.

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Paoli had declared himself openly and the Buonapartes were proscribed. Napoleon was taken but escaped. Paoli's followers descended on the home of the family in Ajaccio (from which, a few hours earlier, Letizia and her younger children had escaped under cover of night), and sacked it. The mother of Napoleon spent the night like a hunted animal in the *maquis*. On the morrow she was joined by her two elder sons. A few days later the family, now stripped of all their possessions, and practically penniless,<sup>1</sup> took ship for France.

<sup>1</sup> See the writer's *Napoleon's Mother*. The family possessed nothing but the clothes on their backs. They were wholly destitute.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TRANSMUTATION OF TYRANTS

NAPOLEON'S part in the campaign of the Jacobins against the revolting cities was his handling of the artillery at the siege of Toulon. The English and Spanish ships were driven, by his gunfire, out of the harbour. Thus to the service in Corsica was added service upon the soil of France.

He was given the rank of General and sent to co-operate with the "Army of Italy" at Nice. This army, like all the other armies of the Revolution, had in attendance a body of commissioners representing the Jacobin Club. One of these was Augustin Robespierre, Maximilien Robespierre's younger brother. Augustin and Napoleon became friendly and the Corsican officer was allowed, in consequence, to read letters from the dictator in which the elements of his policy were explained and defended.

Robespierre's letters no longer exist, and Napoleon's references to them were few—though he stated at St Helena that he thought them sensible.<sup>1</sup> But Robespierre's policy is index enough of his mind and of his necessity. It was a policy of fear both at home and abroad—the quelling of all the rebellious cities, the

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon said to Las Cases: "Robespierre by all accounts was an honest man." This is true. Robespierre left only a small shelf of books and five francs. (Las Cases: *Memorial*.)



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purging of France of every traitor and every opponent and the attacking of every foreign enemy. Fear was represented at home by the guillotine and by firing-squads; abroad by well-equipped and well-disciplined troops. Within a few weeks Lyons, Marseilles, Nantes and Bordeaux, as well as Toulon, were reduced to helplessness and then punished by wholesale massacres. At Nantes a maniac named Carrier filled barges with men, women and children and sank them in the river. He and his friends amused themselves by shooting those who attempted to swim to safety. Joseph Fouché, at Lyons, trained cannon on batches of young children, who were then blown to pieces before his eyes. Fouché was a good and tender father to his own children. Marseilles was ravaged by a nobleman named Stanislas Fréron and Toulon by the Comte de Barras. Only Bordeaux escaped wholesale slaughter, a happy accident due solely to the fact that Robespierre's agent in that city, Jean Lambert Tallien, had rescued from prison (and made his mistress) Thérèse Cabarrus, daughter of the banker to the Spanish Royal House and divorced wife of the Marquis de Fontenay.<sup>1</sup> Thérèse, who was very beautiful, used her influence to rescue as many as possible of the condemned.

The news of these horrors reached the Army of Italy while it was engaged in driving back, across the mountain passes, the allied armies of Austria and Piedmont. Other French armies were proving themselves equally formidable. The frontiers of the fatherland were clear

<sup>1</sup> See the writer's *Gipsy Queen of Paris*. (Chapman and Hall.) There is no other English life of Madame Tallien. An excellent American life is entitled: *Scandalous Princess*. A modern French study is *La Belle Tallien*. 2 vols.

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of enemies, and these frontiers were now thrust back to the Alps and the Rhine. France had not been so united since the reign of Louis XIV; not even Louis XIV had so greatly extended the national territory.

Napoleon drew the only possible inference—namely, that fear is an efficient substitute for loyalty. He knew that the fervour of the Revolution had not prevented wholesale desertions from the armies which, when Robespierre came to power, had been in a condition of extreme weakness. All men were not, it seemed, so much in love with liberty as to be ready to make sacrifices on her behalf. He had sickened with horror at the spectacle of the butchery in Toulon which had followed the taking of the port. Massacre in cold blood, even as a desperate remedy for a desperate disease, was hateful to him. If he gave Robespierre credit for a tremendous achievement, he saw no future for the man or his methods. Fear might reduce France to silence and hold her frozen in unity; it might, by iron discipline, make her soldiers invincible; it could not endure. When Augustin Robespierre offered him, on behalf of his brother, the military governorship of Paris, Napoleon refused the offer.

The refusal was made deliberately after consultation with his mother and brothers.<sup>1</sup> The ground of refusal was Robespierre's policy of terror. But Napoleon did the man the justice of asking himself, daily, how, without terror, France could have been saved. Was there a substitute for fear in a society the foundations of which had been shattered? He fell back once more on his Stoicism. Robespierre, he thought, ought to have

<sup>1</sup> See Norwood Young: *The Growth of Napoleon*.

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followed up his success against the rebellious towns with a resounding appeal to patriotism instead of with massacre. He ought to have held up France, "the great Nation" before the eyes of Frenchmen and, in her name, to have demanded sacrifice. The appeal in the name of liberty and rights had failed because it was a bribe. The appeal to fear would fail because it left unenlisted the noblest elements in human character.

These, it should be noted, were the views of a very young man far removed from the scene of action. Napoleon modified them later. He did not, for example, realize that Robespierre, even as dictator, was the instrument of the Jacobin party, the real dictator. Thus he gave too little weight to the fact that the Jacobins were concerned, first of all, with their own security<sup>1</sup> and were consequently implacably determined to destroy their opponents, who remained numerous and influential. Narrow and vain as was Robespierre's mind, he possessed enough political wisdom to realize that terror as a device of statesmanship cannot endure. The rising tide of a nation's exasperation chilled his heart. Thanks to his efforts France no longer feared foreign invasion, and Frenchmen everywhere were experiencing a glow of pride in the heroic conduct of their soldiers and in the greatness of their victory. Was this the moment, he asked himself, to scourge them with political assassination? His green eyes looked fearfully for some means of escape from the trap into which he had been driven. He thought he saw such means in the

<sup>1</sup> Bribes are always difficult to trace, but the evidence of corruption of the leading Jacobin goes on accumulating from year to year. Robespierre certainly possessed accurate information. All his files were burned by Tallien on the day following his execution.

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moderate men who composed the larger part of the Convention.

These were the remnants of many parties whose silence had bought salvation, timid folk without ambition and without initiative, idealists who had kept their mouths shut and refrained from identifying themselves too closely with any party. If these men found a leader they might become formidable.

Robespierre essayed to lead them. But he hid his design in his heart lest any whisper of it should reach the Jacobins. For what he proposed was, in effect, the abandonment of his party. He would cease to lead a faction in order that he might become the leader of France.

Robespierre, in other words, meant to restore, in his own person, the essential principle of Christian monarchy—namely, the union of leader and people. It is a design that must necessarily form in the mind of every successful party leader, because in the history of such a leader a point will always be reached at which the interests of the party and the interests of the nation can no longer be reconciled. Cromwell reached such a point and dallied, for a time, with the idea of ascending the throne of England. But the Puritans and his own soldiers were too strong for him. In the modern dictatorships, both of the Right and of the Left, that point is fast approaching. The issue, as a rule, lies between the financial backers of the party (who, however, invariably shelter themselves behind the politicians) and the leader.

In Robespierre's case the financial backers were those whose bribes had been accepted by, among others,

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Danton, Fouché, Fréron, Barras and Tallien. These men professed extreme republican views, but they were the agents nevertheless of that Money Power which had tried to set up a Constitutional Monarchy in France. Robespierre was peculiarly hateful to them in that he was incorruptible. None had bribed him, though many had tried to bribe him. He knew, moreover, about the secret dealings of his lieutenants and had used that knowledge to make butchers and assassins of them all.

He planned, now, to hand over these corrupt rogues to the fury of the nation as servants who had exceeded their orders. After that, he meant to declare himself the architect of victory and saviour of France and put away, once for all, the apparatus of fear.

The plan possessed elements of statesmanship as well as of cunning. It was true that France was weary and ashamed of the guillotine and its horrible ministers. The Jacobins were a minority party which had enjoyed popularity only while danger threatened and must certainly have gone down before any determined assault. Further, the massacres in the provincial cities had aroused a degree of passionate resentment which could not fail to make its influence felt, sooner or later, in the capital. Robespierre, in the winter of 1793, was not yet so closely identified with the provincial massacres as to preclude the possibility of making a convincing denunciation of their perpetrators and so ridding himself, at a single stroke, of a batch of dangerous opponents and of the taint of terrorism.

The little man had calculated these odds carefully enough. His anxiety was set not upon his gang of murderers, but upon Danton, who had already, though

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feebly, raised his voice in favour of moderation, and who was concerned to fix upon Robespierre's shoulders the guilt of massacre. If Danton won over the moderate men Robespierre's plan must fail. The green eyes were turned darkly upon the big, burly demagogue who enjoyed still the reputation of a saviour.

Even at St Helena Napoleon believed that, had Robespierre been wise, he would have joined forces with Danton in order to overcome the Jacobins. But that opinion was based on incorrect information, for it is only within recent times that Robespierre's charge against Danton of corruption has been examined impartially and, by some students at any rate, admitted. Robespierre, with his faults, was honest in the sense that he acknowledged no paymaster. Far as he was ready to go in ways of cunning and cruelty, he was not ready to sell his country or to co-operate with those who, as he believed, had already sold her. On the contrary, it was his ambition to deliver France from the Money Power and to make an end, once for all, of the stranglehold of the international bankers, the Rothschilds and Hopes and Barings and their associates Necker, Cabarrus, Ouvrard and the others. Robespierre's fear of Danton and his refusal to make common cause with him were not, therefore, signs of the man's insensate vanity. They were signs, rather, of his clear-sightedness.

It was his habit to absent himself from the Chamber occasionally, when he was meditating some new move. Early in the year 1794 he indulged in one of these prolonged vacations. His absence had the effect of bringing business almost to a standstill, but the only criticisms

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which were directed against him came from the extreme left, from that party known as the *enragés*, which wished, or so it seemed, to make an end of society itself. He returned to the Chamber and proposed, in his frigid tones, that this party should be proscribed.

His motion was instantly agreed to. A few days later, and to the accompaniment of the delirious cheers of the Parisians, Hébert and his gang of cut-throats were beheaded. There could be no doubt, any longer, that Paris, like all France, was on the side of moderation and mercy. In every street of the capital, indeed, men told each other that Robespierre had taken arms against the assassins and would soon make an end of all of them.<sup>1</sup>

Robespierre offered no sign. But after the lapse of a very few days he turned, suddenly, and opened an attack on Danton and Danton's associates. The Chamber heard him with incredulity; Paris, shocked by the prospect of more butchery, bared her teeth. "He will not dare," Danton had exclaimed when warned that it was proposed to arrest him. Robespierre's daring robbed his enemies of their wits. The Chamber shrank in new and lively terror. Danton was delivered to the knife.

Once more Robespierre absented himself. He felt, now, that success was certain, for there remained to be disposed of only the butchers of Lyons and Marseilles and Toulon and Bordeaux. The Chamber which had

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon observed these signs of clemency and said that, had he been in power, he would have shaped his course in accordance with them. (Las Cases: *Memorial*. Gourgand: *Mémoires*.) Testimony to the hopes that were reported in Robespierre at this time is given by Queen Hortense in her *Memoirs* (Vol. I), English translation (Butterworth), and by Madame de Staël, who, indeed, thought of returning to Paris from Switzerland. (See *Madame de Staël à Henri Meister*.)

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made sacrifice of Danton would scarcely boggle at the punishment of men against whom thousands of their fellow-countrymen were bringing charges, not only of most hideous cruelty, but also of shameless and foul corruption. The tyrant scanned the frontiers. His armies were everywhere successful beyond even his expectations. Once more France was established in her glory. He began to purge Paris of all the elements hostile to himself and to his ideas—especially nobles, liberals, bankers, dishonest merchants and persons of immoral life. Robespierre was a Stoic and had made up his mind that Stoicism should be the religion of his new dispensation. Had he succeeded, France would have had her Puritans.

This "purge of virtue," as he called it, is known to history as "the Reign of Terror." It was meant to serve as a preliminary to the assault on the Jacobins and it was timed to end when that assault had taken place. But Robespierre had not yet shown his hand. He remained the dominant figure in the Jacobin Club and was looked upon by his supporters there as the embodiment of all that they held sacred. Robespierre used this trust to strengthen his position. It was part of his purpose that the Jacobins should be divided, the honest against the corrupt, and so the more easily brought into subjection.

By the beginning of June 1794 this plan was well on the way to realization. The dictator had begun to speak about vicious and treacherous persons whose plottings constituted a danger to the Revolution. He let it be known that some who passed for good patriots were included in this number. Instantly names began to be



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bandied about. The fear that had begun to clutch at every heart was quickened so that none felt himself safe.<sup>1</sup>

Robespierre's vanity took satisfaction. His self-righteousness was flattered. Caution in consequence was abandoned at the moment when the need of it was greatest. Wisdom too. The man who essayed to be the head of a proud and brave people fell into the error of basing his policy exclusively on fear, and thus setting narrow bounds to his leadership. It is a mistake into which most of the adherents of the Stoic philosophy in their eagerness to avoid and resist the cultivated selfishness of the hedonists, are liable to fall. Robespierre remembered the price which the Girondists had been compelled to pay for their weakness. He remembered, also, their philosophy—to which he himself had subscribed at one period. These men, he assured himself, had perished by reason of want of discipline and because they had left the devices of human nature out of their account. A Stoic's belief in human right and in the exercise of reason was not, certainly, less than their belief; but it was tempered by "virtue." He began to preach sermons.<sup>2</sup> He declaimed with scorn against those who had turned the doctrine of the Rights of Man into an "organized selfishness." He failed to see that

<sup>1</sup> Barras in his *Mémoires* gives a convincing account of the fear inspired by Robespierre at this time. Nearly all the proposed victims visited Robespierre at his lodging at Duplay's house: in order, if possible, to soften his severity. He received them with haughty indifference, seldom speaking, and sometimes spitting on the floor beside them as he brushed his teeth—for these interviews took place while he was dressing.

<sup>2</sup> Some of Robespierre's sermons have been preserved by Thiers. (*History of the French Revolution*.) They might have been preached by a Puritan clergyman.

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the discipline of the Stoics may easily degenerate into an organized terrorism, indeed must inevitably do so when strong opposition is encountered. Thus he fell into the error of tyrants who would save their fellows by assassinating them. He overlooked the fact that the Stoic philosophy had been evolved from the philosophy of Plato by a small number only of Plato's disciples, and that, further, every religious or philosophical system, the basis of which is Reason, embodies two different and distinct ideas—namely, the idea that human nature—granted a modicum of knowledge—is essentially good and the idea that it is essentially bad.<sup>1</sup>

Such forgetfulness, in the government of men, leads to disaster. For it is equivalent to ignorance of, or contempt for, human nature, which inclines in some to the idea that men are virtuous and in others to the idea that they are both vicious and depraved, and so must be taught good behaviour. Robespierre willed that none should escape his teaching, because his experience in the first years of the French Revolution had convinced him that the number of the greedy and selfish exceeds so greatly the number of the self-sacrificing as to invalidate almost any claim to exemption from teaching. He suspected everybody, and ended by finding grounds for his suspicion.

Teaching and discipline, indeed, seemed to him to be the infallible remedies for human weakness, which it was his mission to prescribe and administer, and he was blind to the fallacy in his creed—namely, that a

<sup>1</sup> The political forms which these two ideas assume are liberalism and socialism, *laissez-faire* and "planned economy." The assumption in the first case is that society will be worse than its component human beings; in the second that it will be better.

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society composed of evil and greedy men cannot provide teachers to instruct it in virtue. Robespierre—and Napoleon too at this time—spoke much about the discipline of virtue as though in the corporate body of "The People" was to be found an element of goodness lacking in the individual man. This "People's" virtue, it was suggested, would act as a "purge" and remove from society all those incapable of being reformed. In fact, the purge, which was real enough, was Robespierre himself, Robespierre the Stoic and Puritan, Robespierre who meant to become the leader of the people and to impose upon them all his own honest, narrow, frugal way of life. But where he saw a splendid winnowing of the chaff from the wheat upon a hundred scaffolds, other men saw only bloody murder, presided over by an arch-hypocrite. It is not, certainly, by accident that Puritanism and hypocrisy have so often and so long been associated in the public mind. For the first business of every Puritan seems to be to identify his private whims with the will of the gods.

"The idea of the Supreme Being,"<sup>1</sup> Robespierre told the Convention on May 7, 1794, "and of the immortality of the Soul is a continual recall to justice; it is therefore social and republican. . . . Will the idea of his annihilation inspire in a man purer and more exalted feelings than that of his immortality? Will it inspire him with more respect for his fellow-creatures and for himself, more devotedness to his country, more courage to defy

<sup>1</sup> Thiers : *History of the French Revolution*. The term "Supreme Being" is, of course, taken from Stoic philosophy. But it served, on this occasion, as a bridge between the Revolution and the Church. Robespierre had not forgotten his upbringing by the Jesuits, nor failed to observe that France, at heart, remained Catholic.

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tyranny, more contempt of death and of sensual pleasure? Ye who mourn a virtuous friend, who love to think that the better part of him has escaped death—ye who weep over the coffin of a son or of a wife, are ye consoled by him who tells you that nothing but vile dust is left of either? . . . Innocence on the scaffold makes the tyrant turn pale in his triumphal car.”

Robespierre, it is clear from this speech, had glimmerings of the truth that a political system must be based on religious ideas. What he did not understand was that his religion, stripped of its phrases, was naked force. A dreadful blindness to the dangers which threatened him held him, consequently, in self-sufficient and self-righteous detachment while the ground on which he stood was being undermined by his enemies, and notably by Joseph Fouché.<sup>1</sup>

Fouché, as has been said, had carried out the punishment of the rebellious city of Lyons. He had killed there, by the guillotine and by artillery fire, some two thousand men, women and children. Lyons was thirsty for his blood. But the rogue was cunning as well as cowardly, a good student of human nature. Knowing that Robespierre meant to offer him in sacrifice, he busied himself to find a weak spot in the man's armour. And he found it. Robespierre's habitual weapon, as has been said, was terror, increased and intensified by a suspense, the effect of which was to convince every one of his enemies that he, personally, was about to be accused. Those who were not, in fact, accused when

<sup>1</sup> The standard work on Fouché is Madelin's great study. See also Fouché's own *Memoirs*, the authentic character of which used to be disputed, but is now, more or less, accepted.

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the day of judgment arrived, were ready in the ecstasy of their relief to deliver up even their dearest friends. Fouché turned suspense against Robespierre himself. He drew up a list of names of persons who, as he asserted, were about to be sent to the guillotine. He visited these persons secretly, by night, and displayed his list, saying:

“You are already a dead man unless *he* dies.”

Everyone believed him, because the secret hand of finance had been extended to most of the deputies and by most of them had been eagerly grasped. Their consciences pronounced sentence upon them. But so quick was their fear of Robespierre that none would consent to attack him openly. It was just possible, after all, that he might spare them. Fouché began to abandon hope, for he realized that he himself, with the blood of the babes of Lyons on his hands, could not play any open part. He looked about him despairingly for a champion and discerned the yellow head of Tallien. His thin, mask-like face lit up with new resolution. Of all the butchers whom Robespierre had sent forth from Paris Tallien was the only one who had shown mercy and earned a reputation for kindness. Tallien, in Bordeaux, as has been said, had actually plucked a girl from the guillotine in order to live with her—thus defying Robespierre’s purge of virtue. Robespierre held the girl prisoner, now, in the *Petite Force* in Paris.

Fouché approached Tallien; he found the man demoralized. Tallien, he discovered, did not care what happened to his Theresia. “You are on the list,” said Fouché. “You can save yourself and us because every-

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one believes that your love of Theresia was the cause of your gentle behaviour in Bordeaux. The Convention will rally to you if you attack Robespierre." Fouché had a Spanish dagger with him. He gave it to Tallien. And very soon the story that it had come from Theresia herself was whispered in the Chamber.

And so the deputies supposed that they saw a true lover entering the lists against the tyrant in order to rescue his lady. Fouché encouraged that illusion by all the means at his disposal, displaying thus an excellent understanding of human nature. Puritanism has no greater weakness than its fear of the romantic element in human nature and its consequent hostility to that element. Robespierre, with his denunciations of "sensual pleasure" and his austere virginity, was without defence, certainly, against a lover's assault.

Whether by accident or design Fouché had discovered the antidote to fear. While Robespierre was compelling the members of the Convention to join him in "acknowledging the Supreme Being," these deputies were taking new heart of courage from the thought of Tallien and his Theresia and the Spanish dagger. Above virtue, it seemed, there was love, even in a world which had forgotten the uses of happiness.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SAVIOURS

ROBESPIERRE's fall and execution at the hands of Tallien and Barras was the signal for an attack upon all those who had in any way been associated with him or with his family. Augustin Robespierre had gone to the guillotine with his brother; Napoleon, as Augustin's friend, was promptly clapped into prison at Antibes until further news should have arrived from Paris.

The step was not unusual at a moment when parties succeeded each other overnight and signalized their coming to power by killing all their opponents. Nevertheless it afforded the Corsican material of thought. Robespierre, as he realized, had been restored by his death to the leadership of the Jacobins, although, in fact, it was the Jacobins who had killed him and although, in the last days of his life, he had been at work plotting to destroy the Jacobins. Fouché, Tallien, Barras, all the men "of Thermidor"<sup>1</sup> were terrorists; all were ready to pursue the methods of butchery. They had slain Robespierre not because he was guilty of conducting political assassinations, but because he knew too much about themselves. Would they kill

<sup>1</sup> Robespierre's fall took place in the month of July, which, in the Revolutionary calendar, was called "Thermidor"—hot month. The Revolutionary and Gregorian calendars do not coincide in point of months—Thermidor, for example, did not coincide exactly with July—for the week, in the Revolutionary calendar, consisted of ten days, every tenth day being a holiday.

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him, Napoleon, because of the chance that Augustin Robespierre might have divulged some of his brother's information?

The odds are that they would not in the ordinary course have neglected so obvious a precaution. As it happened, however, the morrow of Robespierre's death witnessed such scenes as changed, immediately, the complexion of events. Paris, indeed, had not waited for the morrow in order to light bonfires and indulge in open-air dancing. The Reign of Terror and of "Virtue" was at an end; nobody could think of anything else. Like a city delivered from investment or from the plague, Paris made ready once more to live. The assassins of Lyons and Marseilles, in consequence, to their lively astonishment, found themselves provided with haloes. They were the men who had killed the dragon. A little bewildered by this unexpected turn of luck Tallien and Barras and Fouché put the guillotine away, confessing softly that they had never liked it. Tallien went to the *Petite Force* and led forth his Theresia (who was delighted to learn that it was she who had sent him the famous dagger); the crowd outside the prison greeted them with cheers and shouts of "*Vive notre dame de Thermidor.*"

In these circumstances the need to get rid of General Napoleon Buonaparte was not felt to be pressing. He was a good soldier, whose execution might have attracted some attention. He was consequently released and sent back to duty. But the new rulers in Paris had their eyes on him. Victims might be needed at a later period, especially since the citizens of Marseilles and Lyons were sending deputations to the Convention to demand



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vengeance. (Fouché took these threats so seriously and had so little faith in his colleagues that he vanished from public sight.)<sup>1</sup>

Happily for the new Government vengeance was unpopular. Barras found a few scapegoats to satisfy the deputations and, at the same time, organized an efficient force of National Guards, drawn from the middle class, to deal with "Robespierre's tail"—in other words, the Jacobin Club. The "Muscadins," as these young gentlemen Jacobin-baiters were called, were led by Stanislas Fréron. Tallien's Theresia was installed as unofficial queen of this new and hectic Paris.<sup>2</sup>

Barras announced that the reign of liberty—the real thing—had now begun. But since the government of men can be conducted only by means of loyalty, greed or fear, and since loyalty had perished with the King and fear with Robespierre, it was necessary, in the language of finance, to "restore confidence." The bankers were ready to help, provided, of course, that all their terms were granted. These terms included the immediate destruction of the paper-money, Mirabeau's *assignats*, by which fourteen armies had been kept in the field, a coalition of all the powers of Europe vanquished, and the salvation of the fatherland achieved. During the Reign of Terror the *assignats* had actually increased in value. Robespierre had protected them by forbidding

<sup>1</sup> Madelin thinks that he became a swineherd. He is reputed to have been very poor, but it may be that fear rather than poverty was his reason for thus effacing himself. The people of Lyons were bent on securing his punishment. In fact, they did secure the punishment of his associate in the Lyons pro-consulship, Collot d'Herbois.

<sup>2</sup> Barras' *Mémoires* should be consulted here. They are scandalous, but informing. Other memoir-writers about the period are Mallet du Pan, Pasquier, Lavalette, Madame d'Abrantes, Madame de Staël, etc.

## THE SAVIOURS

the private holding of gold or silver and by control of the price-level. It was now suggested to Barras that the embargo on the precious metals ought to be removed. He consented. Within a few weeks the *assignats* had become waste paper because nobody would accept them. Thus, once more, the French Government became wholly dependent upon and subservient to the masters of money. Commodity or irreplaceable money (gold) had replaced token or replaceable money (*assignats*), and the credit system was restored.

The public saw Barras and Tallien, the conquerors of Robespierre; the public did not see the men who were financing these rulers and who had it, now, in their power, by refusing to lend their precious promises, to bring the rulers, instantly, to bankruptcy. Fear seemed to have been abolished as a means of government; in fact all that had happened was that the nature of the fear had changed. Fear of ruin, fear of starvation, had replaced fear of the guillotine. At the same time the opportunity of big profits was being dangled before the eyes of thousands of Frenchmen.<sup>1</sup> Barras, in short, had become the leader of the Money Party. The guillotine as the basis of government had been replaced by the ledger. This Money Party as a political organism, obeyed the natural law of parties; opposition was suppressed and critics were sent to cool their heads outside of France, often in the malarial swamps of Cayenne.

Nevertheless it was found possible to present what was in fact an iron dictatorship as a free and enlightened

<sup>1</sup> The French Revolution is remarkable in that it furnished a series of symbols, each of which represents a form of government. Thus for the throne was substituted the guillotine, for the guillotine the ledger, for the ledger the sword, and so, back again, to the throne.

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democracy, and great numbers of honest men were deceived. The newspapers, as usual, were employed to tell the public what it was desired that the public should hear. Emphasis was laid on the escape from terror which Robespierre's death had effected; emphasis was also laid on the calamity which had befallen the *assignat*, the inference being that, while a paper-money might be supported for a time by the guillotine and its *valets*, gold and silver were the monies of free men. The newspapers developed skilfully the hedonistic philosophy which was the religion of the new Government. Tallien and Barras were daily held up to admiration as wise and merciful rulers, unbending custodians of the Rights of Man. At the same time great deference was paid to the cult of beauty and to women generally. The public, on its short rations, heard morning and evening, about the deliciousness which surrounded Madame Tallien and her beautiful friend Rose, former Vicomtesse de Beauharnais. There was much ado about love, about millinery and frocks and baby linen and food and music and pictures and books and plays. The effect was random and artless, so that the impression was conveyed that Paris had become something more than her former self, a city among cities, sober and gay, genial and yet adventurous. The very poor, for whom a new Reign of Terror had begun in mean streets, knew better. But their skinny bodies were out of sight at last and the murmur of their hate was too faint to be heard.

## CHAPTER X

### GREED AND FEAR

To the Paris of the Thermidoreans Napoleon was summoned from his post with the "Army of Italy." He had escaped vengeance, but the shadow of the Robespierres lay still upon his life. He was a marked man, a suspected man. When he reported at the War Office he was told that he had been nominated for service against the rebels of La Vendée in the capacity of a general of infantry.

He heard the news with lively indignation, for a gunner, then as now, looked upon himself as a superior kind of soldier with a superior kind of training. He protested, asking if the Republic had no need of highly trained artillerymen. He was told to obey orders. He refused and was immediately placed on half-pay.

There began for him the most melancholy period of his life. He was without resources, and his pay was barely enough to keep him in food. His clothes were threadbare; his boots in holes. And he had no future. He went about Paris, vagabond-like, with despair on his lean young face. His emaciated body seemed to possess no strength. Thoughts of suicide, as he dwelt on the poverty of his mother and sisters, several times crossed his mind. His family, after all, had sacrificed everything for France and for the French alliance. They had lost

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everything, literally, except the clothes on their backs. They had not complained. The great principles of the Revolution had triumphed against all Europe and it had seemed, for a time, as if a new order of Society was in the making. And then, suddenly, the Stoic doctrine, which had so excellently accorded with Corsican ideals, had been extinguished in blood. Napoleon and his people heard themselves called "Terrorists" and found themselves ostracized from the society of their fellows. All had been stripped of their public offices,<sup>1</sup> all were in danger of persecution. Worse still, the principles which they professed were everywhere being abandoned and held up to scorn.

Napoleon was not deceived by the smiling face of the new Paris. Hunger, cold and disappointment sharpened his wits and quickened his senses. He knew his Barras, whom he had met at the siege of Toulon, and quickly got to know his Tallien. These men were assassins and traitors who had sold France to a gang of rogues. They were without morals or ideals, and the parade which they made now of their liberal principles was a cloak for every kind of robbery and brigandage. The penniless young officer in his threadbare coat watched the gay Parisian scene with shame and anger. The Stoic could no longer contain himself.

<sup>1</sup> Lucien was in prison in the south. Joseph was without employment. Napoleon's mother and her large family of children moved about from one mean lodging to another in the districts of Marseilles and Toulon. But they retained their pride and impressed those with whom they came into contact as "superior people." The first break in the frost of calamity occurred when Joseph married Julie Clary, the daughter of a wealthy Marseilles silk mercer. Julie was destined to mount with her husband the thrones of Naples and Spain. Her younger sister, Désirée, died Queen of Sweden.

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"Luxury, pleasure, art," he wrote to his brother, "are once more rampant here. Carriages and smart people begin to reappear. They seem to forget, as one forgets a nightmare, that they ever ceased to glitter. Women everywhere—at the theatres, out driving, at the lectures. The men mad about them, thinking of nothing else and living only by and for them.

"If this goes on much longer I shall end my life by no longer getting out of the way when a carriage passes. I'm sometimes astonished at myself, but I've reached my present state of mind as a result of witnessing the spectacle of this country's moral degradation and also on account of my familiarity with danger. I'm not greatly attached to life. . . . Life is a dream which soon fades."

But Napoleon's mind was at work, nevertheless, seeking for answers to the questions which, every day, thrust themselves upon him. Platonism had been set up as a system of government. It had produced, under the Girondists, invasion of France across every frontier and rebellion at home, which was scarcely less than civil war. It had not been able to rescue the fatherland from these distresses. And so the philosophy of the Stoics had been tried. Robespierre, it was true, had driven out the foreign enemies and quelled the revolting cities, but only at the price of the Reign of Terror. In despair, men had changed their philosophy once more—back to a bastard Platonism. And already it was clear that the second dispensation of this creed would end as the first had ended. Would the Stoics, when

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they returned to power, bring the guillotine back with them?

It was possible no longer for Napoleon to assure himself that the wrong kind of Stoicism had been practised by Robespierre and his associates. That idea had served well enough among the troops of the *Alpes Maritimes*; it would not serve in the Paris of Theresia Tallien. These people were insensible to any idea of glory or patriotism; nothing but naked fear could conceivably exert influence upon them and their financial backers. Must greed, then, be replaced by fear and fear by greed in an endless sequence until France was destroyed? Napoleon turned his thoughts to the system of government which the Revolution had destroyed. He hid his knowledge in his heart, but his conduct began to undergo change. Gradually the cold fury of the Stoic was transmuted to a curiosity essentially scientific and empirical. Why face life with ready-made ideas and so, probably, fall into the errors of the factions? Why not, on the contrary, come to life with an open mind? He called upon Barras and reminded him of their meeting at Toulon. He asked that his experience as a general of artillery might be made use of in the service of the State. Barras seems to have concluded that the little soldier was harmless, for he obtained a post for him in the Department of War and allowed him to come to Theresia Tallien's *salon*. Napoleon told Theresia's fortune and was rewarded by an order from the lady entitling him to indent for a length of army cloth sufficient to make an overcoat. A few weeks later Barras had need of a lieutenant to help him to beat off a threatened attack by a Royalist mob. He sent for

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Napoleon and put him in charge of the troops who were guarding the Convention. Napoleon administered a "whiff of grapeshot" to the startled rioters and re-established, suddenly and completely, their respect for constituted authority. Next morning General Buonaparte had become a national figure.





## BOOK II

### DESIGN FOR CIVILIZATION

“Those who have wrought great changes in the world never succeeded by gaining over chiefs, but always by inspiring the multitude. The first is the resource of intrigue and produces only second-rate results: the second is the resort of genius and transforms the face of the universe.”

Napoleon: *Memorial*. II, ii, p. 81.



## CHAPTER XI

### "KING-THOUGHT"

THE reason why Napoleon was appointed by Carnot and Barras to command the "Army of Italy" was not, as is often said, the fact that he had married Theresia Tallien's friend, Rose de Beauharnais (and incidentally renamed her Josephine, one of her names being Joseph), but that he had submitted to the Directors a plan of campaign which seemed to offer some hope of success. His service with the "whiff of grapeshot" was an added merit in the eyes of men who found themselves insecurely seated between Finance on the one hand and Rebellion on the other.

This plan of campaign had been submitted to various experts, and by most of them pronounced to be crazy. But Carnot believed in it. Carnot was under no illusions about the state of the "Army of Italy" and seems to have felt that only a disciplinarian of the sternest kind could effect any improvement. Barras had no hope at all. Napoleon had done well in Paris;<sup>1</sup> he was not likely to do worse than anybody else among the naked, unfed and unpaid freebooters who were now gathered in the neighbourhood of Nice awaiting the combined attack of Austrian and Piedmontese troops.

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon was, for a short time, General in Command of the Paris garrison and of the forces of the Interior. He maintained perfect order in the capital. (See the writer's *Gipsy Queen of Paris*—life of Madame Tallien.)

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Napoleon himself expressed confidence. The plan which he had disclosed to the Directors constituted but a small part of the plan that was forming in his mind. He knew that he must create his army from the foundation before he could hope to accomplish anything, and he saw this task as by far the most important of any that awaited him. On what lines was his army to be reconstituted? How was it to be inspired with the effective spirit of victory? Above all, how was discipline to be built up and maintained? He would not, he was resolved, lead a band of brigands; he rejected the methods of the Terrorists. There grew in his thought the conception of a true leadership based upon spiritual contact between general and private. He would give his men a new symbol to replace the guillotine—Himself.

The history of the first Italian campaign is the record of this experiment. When its new general reached it the "Army of Italy" did not possess a single horse. It had no service corps, and its store of ammunition was almost exhausted. The soldiers lived by theft, for they had not been paid during many months. Napoleon borrowed money from local merchants and paid his troops. He bought, and paid for, necessary supplies. At the same time he listened to the grievances of the men and redressed all those which he found to be just. His troops got to know him and began to believe in him. More important still, they began to believe in themselves. When that point had been reached, and it was reached within a very short space of time, he opened his campaign and sprang, suddenly, upon an enemy who was far indeed from expecting him. Defence had been turned into offence. Within

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the space of a few weeks the Alps had been crossed, the Piedmontese separated from the Austrians, Piedmont conquered, the Austrians defeated, and the City of Milan taken by the French. A series of proclamations thanked the soldiers and announced their heroism to the fatherland, thus:

“Soldiers, in a fortnight you have gained six victories. . . . Destitute of everything, you have supplied all your wants. You have won battles without cannon, crossed rivers without bridges, made forced marches without shoes, bivouacked without brandy and often without bread. The Republican phalanxes, the soldiers of Liberty, alone could have endured what you have endured. Thanks be to you for it, soldiers. Your grateful country will give you its thanks, and if your conquest at Toulon foreboded the glorious campaigns of 1793, your present victories foreshadow one more glorious. The two armies which so lately attacked you boldly are fleeing, affrighted before you. The rascals who laughed at your distress and rejoiced in thought, at the triumph of your enemies, are confounded and trembling.”

The immediate effect of these proclamations was the knitting together of general and army in one indissoluble unit. Bonaparte's soldiers took him to their hearts and began to promote him according to his achievements. At the Bridge of Lodi, he attained, at their hands, the rank of “little Corporal,” because he had exposed himself to a withering fire and thus turned defeat into victory. The more remote effects were exercised not in Italy but in France. Napoleon's proclamations released, at last, the pent-up feelings of patriotism and pride which the achievements of the French armies under Robespierre had awakened but which the guillotine had frozen. The whole body of

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the peasantry thrilled at tributes to their fathers and brothers and sons, which all of them knew to be deserved. General Bonaparte became more than a hero in their eyes. He became a friend, who knew their sacrifice and knew how to value it. And he became also the stern judge of those who had allowed a French army to go destitute, without cannon or bread or brandy. Everyone knew that money had been provided for the armies. Who had spent it? And were these spend-thrifts the "rascals" who rejoiced in French defeats? The instincts of loyalty which had reached out, in the old days, to the King's Majesty, began to fare forth, timidly, towards the "little Corporal." Nor were the cities less enthusiastic—or less indignant—than the country folk. Paris, weary of Theresia and her new frocks, wearier still of scarcity and hardship, turned with an infinite relief to the battlefields of Lombardy. This was better, surely, than beheading Frenchmen or starving them that bankers and contractors might grow fat out of their distress.

Napoleon gathered up the flags he had taken from the enemy and sent them, in a great glowing bunch, to the Directors. At the same time he despatched to them a war indemnity of £3,000,000 in gold and many famous works of art. The long caravan bearing these trophies wound its way slowly over the Alps and across the whole body of France. Its arrival in Paris wrought delirium.

But the Directors, and especially Barras, were uneasy—in spite of the joy which the gold afforded them. A hero had arisen who belonged to no party. Could they count on him? He had already, in his proclamations, exposed their roguery. They sent some of his gold to

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London <sup>1</sup> for safe keeping, and told him that a second general would be sent to Italy to share his burden. The reply, that he wished to be relieved of his command, since “one bad general is better than two good ones” so terrified them, however, that they begged him to do anything he chose in any way he chose.

Their anxiety was shared by others. The gold which Bonaparte was sending out of Italy was part of a subsidy paid by England to Austria and her allies. It had been raised in the usual way by loans from the great banking houses. What would happen to it? The bankers learned that Bonaparte, while in Italy, had sent an expedition to his native Corsica and had reconquered the island. They read correctly the meaning of this move. The possession of Corsica by the French was equivalent to the unsealing of the naval base of Toulon. Did Bonaparte contemplate a naval expedition as well? From day to day they grew more anxious about their trade with the East Indies, which, already, formed the backbone of their prosperity. If there should not be enough colonial produce to pay for the wheat which England imported from the Baltic, payment might have to be made in gold. As lenders of promises to pay gold in excess of their holding of that metal they would, in such circumstances, be ruined. They would have been more anxious still had they known that the Conqueror of Italy was in touch with the Knights of Malta.

<sup>1</sup> Though England and France were at war the movements of gold continued with astonishing regularity. (See Feaveryear: *The Pound Sterling*.) It was a criminal offence to ship gold out of England, but the money-lenders were already above the law. Their insolent contempt for “the politicians” (i.e. the elected representatives of the nation) was not a whit less in those days than it is at the present time.



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In fact, Napoleon had read the riddle of money and of the Money Power. He understood that the French Revolution was only one major event in a long process of events which included the English Revolution and before that the enfeeblement, throughout Europe, of the Christian Church. Geneva, Amsterdam and London were the centres of the Money Power, which represented a true international force that was replacing Christendom just as Christendom, formerly, had replaced the power of Imperial Rome. The immediate object of Money was to establish Constitutional monarchies on the English plan in all the European capitals and so to govern Europe and the world by means of debts contracted by these constitutional monarchies and their parliaments from the financiers. The weak point in this scheme, as the Corsican unerringly saw, was the fact that the bankers were without substantial means. Their promises to pay could be sustained as "good money" only while merchandise was exchanged for merchandise—only, that is to say, so long as payment between countries was made in goods and services. If goods could not be shipped to pay for goods, then gold would have to be shipped. The bankers possessed only a tithe of the gold which they had promised to pay.

This is the real explanation of Napoleon's dealings with the Knights of Malta and of his efforts to reconquer Corsica—which island, incidentally, had been annexed to the English crown, Paoli having been once more removed to London.<sup>1</sup> The general of the "Army of Italy" bore the English people no ill-will. He under-

<sup>1</sup> King George III took the title of "King of Corsica."

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stood perfectly that they were without any real say in the government of their country. His thoughts were directed solely against that Master State, neither English nor French, nor Italian, nor Austrian, nor German, nor Russian, but the overlord of all these lands, by which the ancient civilization of Europe had been destroyed. It was Money, organized as a world power, that he meant to fight, and, if possible, to destroy. Since Money had its headquarters now in the City of London, his attack was directed chiefly against that city and its bankers. The object was not the conquest of England, but the ruin of Lombard Street.

Napoleon's plan, as his actions show—for no word escaped him at this period—included the re-establishing in France of the Christian Church, the recreation there of a Christian Monarchy in his own person—because the Bourbons were pensioners of the Money Power—and the inauguration of a period of prosperity and plenty based on science on the one hand and on good government on the other. Science was to supply the goods; good government was to effect their distribution. Napoleon, already, had a monetary system of his own, derived, in part, from consideration of the speeches of Mirabeau. He aimed, in modern phrase, at a “commodity franc”—that is to say, at a franc the buying power of which should be protected fully against the manœuvres of the bankers—exactly the same object which, at the time of writing, directs the policy of the President of the United States, Mr Roosevelt.

Napoleon's attitude to the Christian Church, during his Italian campaign, is specially deserving of attention. In the year 1795 France remained a non-Christian

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country. The priests had been expelled and were not allowed to return, and the majority of the churches were closed. The Government, indeed, was even more hostile to Christianity than is the Government of Soviet Russia at the present time. If a few priests who had taken the civil oath were allowed to officiate, they did so in circumstances of very considerable difficulty. Scarcely a year had passed since a girl from the Comédie had been worshipped in Notre Dame as the goddess of Reason, and since Theresia Tallien herself had played the same part in the Cathedral Church of Bordeaux.

In these circumstances it required high courage to attend any religious service; for a public official to go to Church, on any pretext, was for that official to place himself in direct opposition to the policy of the Government, and thus to put his office and his ambitions in jeopardy. Nevertheless Napoleon went to church. His mother and newly married eldest sister, Elise, visited him at Mombello in Italy, after he had finally crushed the Austrians. His second sister, Paulette, was about to marry his friend, Emmanuel Leclerc. He insisted that Elise and her husband, who had been married by the civil authority at Marseilles, should be remarried by a priest according to the rite of the Church, and that Paulette's marriage should be solemnized at the same time and in the same manner. A double ceremony, therefore, took place in the presence of the general and his mother. Elise and Paulette were married in the Oratory of St Francis of Mombello and the nuptial benediction was given by the curé of Bovisio, Joseph-Marie Brioschi.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These details were unearthed by Masson : *Napoléon et sa Famille*.

## “KING-THOUGHT”

News of the event soon leaked out and in due course reached the ears of the peasantry of France, who hankered still for their altars, as they hankered still for their King. So General Bonaparte was not opposed to Mother Church. The peasantry heard, later, that the soldiers of the “Army of Italy” had been warned on no account to ill-use any priests or to do damage to any churches, and that their general had extended his special protection to the French priests, exiled in Italy, who, by reason of his victories, had fallen once more into the hands of the Revolution. This news sent a thrill of joy through all the provinces of France, where the doctrines of Rousseau were losing their attractiveness. Napoleon, meanwhile, had seen that venerable prelate, the Bishop of Imola, who was soon to ascend the throne of St Peter as Pius VII, and had assured him that, so far as he was concerned, the Catholic Church had nothing to fear.

Thus the general of the “Army of Italy” dissociated himself from the religion and philosophy of the Revolution, from Platonism and Stoicism and their modern applications, and took his stand, however unobtrusively, with the common folk, the inhabitants of cottages and humble dwellings, where pious men and women remained faithful to Christ. Since the eyes of Europe were focused upon him, his smallest action was soon made known to all, but it is doubtful if this care of the Christian religion was understood by any member of the French Government. A successful general, after all, is entitled to his foibles. Nobody objected. Attention in Paris was directed, rather, to the semi-regal state in which the general chose to live. The Directors had

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a quick eye for a King; they were engaged at the moment in negotiating with the Bourbons and the English Government for a restoration which would establish them in power and make France really safe for promise-lending. Was Bonaparte likely to give them trouble?

Not yet. It was a merit of Napoleon that he knew, as a rule, when to strike. At Lodi, as he stated, he had realized that he was likely to be in a position to play a great part. He was determined not to ruin that part by a too-hasty beginning. The Revolution was not yet complete. Men had to learn thoroughly that a greed system, such as that of Barras, must sooner or later be transmuted once more into a fear system, which, again, would be changed into a system of greed. They had to feel in their spirits and minds the desolation and despair of this alternation of misery. Then, and only then, would they be ready to receive again from strong hands the system of loyalty which had been European civilization. Napoleon watched the breakdown of the attempt at a Restoration, and the events which followed that breakdown, with serene eyes. He marked the clash of parties in Paris—Royalists, Jacobins, Thermidoreans—and withdrew himself as far as possible from it. When Barras turned upon Carnot and instituted a new dispensation of fear (called the "Little Terror"<sup>1</sup>) he ceased to hold any communication with the Directory.

Soon afterwards he signed with Austria at Campo Formio a peace treaty which awoke a fresh burst of hero-worship throughout France. Great preparations were made in Paris to receive him on his return, but he

<sup>1</sup> See Lavalette *Mémoires*.

## "KING-THOUGHT"

arrived during the small hours of the morning and thereafter hid himself in his house in the rue des Victoires. He was elected a member of the Institute, and at once assumed the cap and gown of that body as his ordinary out-of-doors dress. None of the parties could obtain from him any expression of political opinion. At the formal presentation of the Peace Treaty to the Directors, however, he took occasion to make a veiled reference to Barras' "Little Terror" and the "Dry Guillotine" (transportation) which had characterized it. He said: <sup>1</sup>

"Religion, feudalism, royalty have, successively, for twenty centuries, governed Europe; but from the peace which you have just concluded dates the era of representative governments."

His face as he used these words was expressionless. But all who heard him knew that, only two months before, Barras had dragged from their seats in the Parliament House, the elected representatives of the French people and sent them, untried, to rot in tropical swamps. That ugly fact made the general's words a challenge, perhaps even a threat. There was no representative government in France and no prospect of the restoration of such a government. Moreover, the fact that Barras had had financial dealings with London was gradually leaking out. The contrast afforded between the bedizened traitor on the Directorial Throne, corrupt to the bone, and that proud succession "religion, feudalism, royalty" was not missed by the Parisians.

Barras accepted the treaty and then, in blustering

<sup>1</sup> Thiers: *History of the French Revolution*.

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tones, bade the general address himself to the conquest of England:

"Go," he cried, "and by the punishment of the Cabinet of London strike terror into the hearts of all who miscalculate the strength of a free people."

The injunction was not, perhaps, wholly insincere. Barras had failed to come to terms with the Bourbons and suspected that his failure was due, to a great extent, to the lack of confidence felt in him as Kingmaker by the City of London, which had been forced, owing to Bonaparte's success in Italy, to abandon the gold standard and was consequently in a very ill-humour. But the possibility that this upstart general might end his career, and his life, in attempting a crazy enterprise was not absent certainly from the Director's mind.

"You need not tell me," Napoleon remarked a few days later to his friend Bourienne,<sup>1</sup> "about how much the people want to see me. Crowds as big would gather to watch me led to the guillotine. I'm not going to stay in Paris. There's nothing to be done here."

Paris was not yet ready for him. "The pear," in his own bitter phrase, was "not yet ripe." He turned his attention to the scheme which he had evolved during his campaign in Italy.

<sup>1</sup> Bourienne : *Mémoires*.

## CHAPTER XII

### FIRST CONSUL AND PRESIDENT

THE City of London, as has been said, had been forced to abandon the gold standard<sup>1</sup> by reason chiefly of Napoleon's seizures of the precious metal in Italy, for these seizures shook the credit of the Austrian Government and so reduced the value of its obligations to London. The solvency of great financial houses in that city was consequently rendered doubtful. A panic occurred and King George III had to be called hurriedly from Windsor on a Sunday to authorise the issue of paper-money.

Napoleon proposed now to attack Lombard Street in a different way. He aimed, as has been said, at the line of communications joining England to India, and so at that stream of East Indian commodities which the merchant-bankers of London were accustomed to trade for the wheat of the Baltic States—for these bankers had already so severely restricted English agriculture that England was no longer in a position to feed herself. Napoleon's belief was that if large quantities of gold were made to flow out of London, the pressure upon France would soon diminish, for the reason that the merchant-bankers were lending promises to pay much larger amounts of gold than they possessed.

It was peace with England, in short, that Napoleon

<sup>1</sup> Feaveryear's *The Pound Sterling* is a valuable work on this period.



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went to seek in Egypt, a peace in which France would be able to re-establish her trade and commerce, and in which a true and lasting system of government could be established. Bringing such a peace he, Napoleon, would be welcomed as the leader of the people and endowed by the people with the authority necessary to the carrying out of his plans. As has been said, careful preparations had already been made. Corsica was in French hands and consequently it had been possible to gather a large fleet in the harbour of Toulon.

This fleet captured the reputedly impregnable island of Malta without the firing of a shot, because a secret arrangement had already been made with the Knights of Malta.<sup>1</sup> Within a short space of time Napoleon had landed at Alexandria and was on the march to Cairo. He had men of science and engineers with him who were to be given the task of cutting a ship canal through the Isthmus of Suez and thus opening a new waterway to India.<sup>2</sup> But the British fleet under Nelson had been sent out to attack an enterprise so terrifying to the City of London. Nelson discovered and engaged the French flotilla in the bay of Aboukir; he destroyed it. Napoleon found himself a prisoner in the land which he had conquered. His plan was in ruins. It was more than doubtful if he would ever be able to return to France.

His courage and resourcefulness, in these melancholy circumstances, alone averted disaster. The Turks were the titular overlords of Egypt and the Turkish army was

<sup>1</sup> The island was surrendered to the French, who could not possibly have taken it by force.

<sup>2</sup> Much trade with India used the Suez route, which was called the land route.

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officered to some extent by Englishmen. After Nelson's victory at the Nile the Sultan set forces in motion to destroy the entrapped French. One army advanced through Syria, the other was shipped across the Mediterranean. Napoleon made a dash through Palestine and laid siege to Acre. He failed to reduce the town, thanks to Sydney Smith's brilliant defence. He turned right-handed, met the oncoming Turks near the Jordan, with the threat from Acre still on his left flank. Then, at breakneck speed, retraced his steps to Egypt and defeated the second Turkish army while it was in process of landing, on the shore of the Bay of Aboukir.

The French in Egypt were now safe for the time being. Sydney Smith sent Napoleon a bunch of English and French newspapers in which the state of France, since the Egyptian expedition had sailed, was fully disclosed. Napoleon read that all his conquests in Italy had been lost and that an Austrian army was advancing upon Genoa with the object of invading France. Barras and his Government seemed to have fallen into a condition of utter helplessness. The Corsican decided there and then to put into execution, in unfavourable circumstances, the plan which, as he had hoped, would have emerged naturally from real success in Egypt. He made over his command, gathered a few friends and embarked for France in a small sailing-vessel. The vessel escaped the English fleet, put into Ajaccio in Corsica for a few hours (where Napoleon learned that the French troops in the island had received no pay for a year), and next day anchored off Frejus. As soon as it became known that General Bonaparte was on board, the fisher-folk of the town

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went out to the ship and brought him ashore with them in defiance of the quarantine officers, who insisted that there was plague in Egypt.

"Better plague," said the people, "than the Austrians."

And so spoke all France from the Mediterranean to the North Sea. Napoleon saw now that the lessons he had taught while in Italy had been learned. He had established with this French people a relationship as intimate as that which had existed formerly between the people and the House of Bourbon. In consequence, and through the medium of his person, the People, as opposed to the parties, existed once more, and was capable again of exerting its influence. While there had been no King, in other words, there had been no People; there had merely been a group of parties of which that in possession of the strongest financial backing had usually come to the top—and so to the task of rewarding its backers. As he drove towards Paris he read on a thousand triumphal arches which busy hands had run up to welcome him, on receipt of news of his landing, the same word—namely, "Saviour." France had given herself to him; he might do with her anything he pleased.

He resolved to do nothing unconstitutional. But when he reached Paris and was plunged again into the political intrigues of the capital, knowledge came that what the People ask and what their masters are willing to concede are two different things. All the parties were ready to bid high for his support as a soldier; none so much as contemplated his accession to political power. He shut himself up in his house and refused to receive visitors. He was determined to keep faith with the

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People who had welcomed him and were waiting his action. He would not be the leader of any party, not even of the Army. How to achieve that difficult and daring purpose? The means of which he stood in need were supplied by those moderate men to whom Robespierre had in vain addressed his last despairing appeal, and who were fearful alike of the Royalists, the Jacobins, and the Thermidoreans. Their leader was the ex-abbé Siéyès.<sup>1</sup> He came to Napoleon secretly and unfolded a plan by which the parties might be played off one against the other, so as completely to cancel them all out.

It was a plan in strict accord with the existing constitutional usage. Napoleon accepted it. A few days later, when its success seemed assured, he rebuked Fouché, now emerged once more from obscurity to be Barras' Minister of Police, because that man had shut the gates of Paris.

"Good heavens, man," Napoleon cried, "we go with the Nation and by its strength alone. Let no citizen be disturbed—see to it that this triumph of public opinion resembles in nothing the doings of other days, when gangs and groups laid violent hands on authority."<sup>2</sup>

The same day he demanded of Barras' secretary:

"What have the Directors done with that France which I left so powerful? I left her in peace; I find her at war. I left her victorious; I find her defeated. I left millions of money taken in Italy; I find ruinous

<sup>1</sup> Siéyès was asked once, in his old age, what he did during the Reign of Terror. He replied, "I lived."

<sup>2</sup> Thiers' *History of the French Revolution*.

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taxation and destitution. What has happened to the 100,000 Frenchmen who were my friends, my companions in glory? They are dead."

Siéyès' plan, on its first day, disclosed no weakness. But the abbé suggested that it might, nevertheless, be prudent, before the second day dawned, to lay hands on some of the more turbulent spirits. Napoleon refused.

"I swore in the morning," he objected, "to protect the national representatives. I will not, in the evening, violate my oath."

That he had the Parisians as well as the peasantry with him there could be no doubt. They thronged out to St Cloud, to Marie Antoinette's palace, where the final encounter was to take place, as if this meeting of the two Chambers in a moment of national crisis was a public festival. Napoleon's hopes rose. The People, he thought, would compel their representatives. Siéyès, better instructed in politics, had taken the precaution to keep a travelling-carriage, horsed and victualled, in readiness in case his plans miscarried. It seemed, soon, as if the coach would be needed, for the little general was received by the Upper Chamber in a chill silence that unnerved him, and by the Lower Chamber with a lively display of violence. Happily for him, his younger brother, as one of the Corsican deputies, occupied the chair<sup>1</sup> in this second Chamber. Lucien Bonaparte shared none of his brother's scruples about acting unconstitutionally. When Napoleon had been rescued by grenadiers from the fury of the deputies and dragged

<sup>1</sup> The representatives took the chair in succession for short periods. Lucien Bonaparte had been made President on news of his brother's landing in France.

out of the hall, Lucien refused to receive the motion that his brother be outlawed. Lucien was mobbed in his turn and, in his turn, dragged from the building by the soldiers. He leaped on to a horse and shouted to the troops that deputies in English pay were intimidating the Chamber. As President, he ordered the troops to clear the Chamber of these traitors. There was a moment of hesitation and then drums began to roll. The troops burst in upon the deputies, many of whom climbed out through the windows.

Napoleon had achieved his object, but at the expense of the constitution and with the help of the Army. He found himself in consequence in the position which it had been his chief object to avoid—namely, that of a military dictator. He lost no time in trying to correct that impression, declaring, quite truthfully, that the deputies who had threatened him represented nobody in France but themselves, and promising that the nation would be afforded an early chance of expressing its opinion about the new Consular Government, the heads of which were himself, as First Consul, Siéyès and Roger Ducos. He held aloof from the army and from the party organizations, declaring that his party was the whole French people.

These steps satisfied everybody except himself. It was obvious that he was the nation's choice; obvious that the Directors and their system were universally execrated, both by reason of robberies of the public funds and of inability to maintain order at home or security on the frontiers; obvious too that no alternative to the Consular Government existed anywhere. Napoleon, nevertheless, suffered deep mortification that

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his coming to power had been marred by a display of violence in consequence of which his office as general had been magnified at the expense of his political leadership. So sensitive, indeed, was he on this subject that the Army leaders soon began to complain that, in his power, he wished to have nothing to do with them. They could not see the danger which he saw so clearly—namely, that he would be forced by his own and France's enemies into the position of a party leader, and, as a party leader, destroyed by the other parties.

That danger was the greater because of the confusion into which government in all its departments had fallen. For a parallel to this confusion, indeed, it is necessary to come to the situation in the United States of America on the day when President Franklin Roosevelt assumed office. The France of Napoleon was, in many ways, astonishingly like the America of Mr Roosevelt. In both cases there was severe financial crisis; in both government had become disorganized and was falling into contempt; in both the masters of money were demanding fresh sacrifices by the people which no popular leader dared to exact; in both it was the hope and the intention of these masters of money to use the new ruler, and the enthusiasm which his appearance had evoked, to achieve the ends which it had not been possible to achieve without him. International finance meant to make catspaw of Napoleon just as it meant to make catspaw of Mr Roosevelt. In both cases a beginning was made with flattery and offers of help.

As soon as he saw Napoleon, Ouvrard, the Paris banker, told his agent to "buy," and went in person to

the Luxembourg to place financial resources at the First Consul's disposal. Madame de Staël, acting on her father's behalf, came galloping to Paris and went about the capital proclaiming the virtues and statesmanship of the new ruler. Finance, in other words, attempted to thrust upon Napoleon, as, later, it was to attempt to thrust upon Mr Roosevelt, the part of the "philosopher King" or "Wise Man,"<sup>1</sup> (whichever might seem the more agreeable), who should restore "sound money." The leader's popularity was to serve the ends of the promise-lenders and their system. On these terms the promise-lenders were ready to mobilize the necessary resources and to accord as many empty titles as the ruler might wish to acquire. The most powerful party in the world, in short, sought to regain its control of the nation by securing the adherence of the national leader.

The First Consul, like the President, realized quite clearly what was happening. Like the President, he was determined to maintain his independence. Like the President, he understood, as none of those who surrounded him understood, the formidable character of the task ahead of him. Napoleon's position was less secure, in point of fact, than Mr Roosevelt's position. The President of the United States came to office by the way of strictest constitutional usage; there was, in his election, no moment of danger and no resort to force. Soldiers had not appeared in the House of Representatives to clear his path before him. He was in no danger, consequently, of being called dictator or of hearing his authority identified with the Sword. The

<sup>1</sup> See *The Republic* of Plato and the writings of the Stoics.



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President, again, was in a position to lay his hands on a stock of gold amounting to about half of the world's supply of the precious metal, whereas the First Consul could scarcely lay his hand on an *écu*. Desperate, in many ways, as was America's financial plight in March 1933, there was no lack of a substantial "basis of credit." Napoleon, on the contrary, was almost without credit, for the *assignats* had been destroyed and he possessed very little gold.

## CHAPTER XIII

### FIELD AND FACTORY

THERE are, as has been said, only two forms of government—namely, that in which a party dominates the nation and that in which the nation, having found a leader, dominates the parties. Both forms have appeared under different names at different periods of time. Thus to repeat, the Roman monarchy of the Tarquins was a party government of the patrician families. When the Tarquins no longer served their party efficiently they were replaced by a patrician oligarchy called a republic. Baronial feudalism reproduced, many centuries later, the essential features of party government, which is now, again, being reproduced by the Bolshevists in Russia, the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany. The greatest of all party governments, however, is that oligarchy of international bankers which has ruled the world during more than a century, screening its activities behind the façade of Constitutional democracy; for the exploitation of the people has been accomplished with great show of liberty both of the press and of speech, and actually in many lands by means of the ballot-box. The fact that political parties cannot exist without funds, the sources of which are kept secret, has largely escaped public attention.

The other form of government—namely, integration

of the whole people by means of leadership, was peculiar to the Christian era and owed its origin, as has been said, directly to Christianity and to the conception of the Fatherhood of God and, hence, of the brotherhood of man. Its form was Christian kingship and European civilization was its expression. This form exists nowhere in the world to-day except in the United States of America, where President Roosevelt has effected an integration of the whole American people and has, consequently, brought even the power of Money into subjection and service. It is possible, of course, that the European dictators—Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini and the others—may yet follow where Roosevelt has led, escaping, thus, from the grip of the parties which now command them and from the Money Power which, in the last issue, controls all parties. But this will not occur unless the dictator is ready to base his power upon an order of ideas for which he has so far shown but little regard.<sup>1</sup> Christian Kingship (or Presidency) being based upon loyalty not to the person of the leader so much as to the principle which the leader represents—namely, the love of God and of one's fellows according to the command of Christ—cannot continue where those principles are not rooted in the minds and supported by the convictions of the whole people.

“I found the crown of France,” said Napoleon, “lying in the gutter, and put it on my head.”

That crown was the spiritual inheritance of Christendom. Like the President of the United States, the First Consul knew—or rather was beginning to guess at—the

<sup>1</sup> Hitler's attack on the Nazi chiefs should be noted. Is he trying to exchange the leadership of a party for the leadership of the whole people?

virtue and glory of Christendom, and was resolved to bestow it, if possible, upon the nation which trusted him.

Among his first acts, therefore, was a relaxation of the laws against emigrants and priests. The practice of the Christian religion was encouraged, and the idea that all Frenchmen, Royalists and Jacobins alike, were members of the same family emphasized. At the same time it was made known that the First Consul looked upon the family—as opposed to the individual—as the true political unit, and that, in consequence, women of notoriously immoral life would not be received at the Consular Court at the Luxembourg. These changes occasioned angry criticism, but Napoleon's popularity with the people silenced the objectors. Meanwhile uneasiness about him began to infect the minds of the financiers and stock-jobbers who had surrounded Barras. The First Consul set up a committee (like the U.S. Senate Banking Inquiry) to look into accounts. He refused to reduce the French tariff against English goods and thus, at once, fell foul of Lombard Street, which, in accordance with its custom, was urging that goods must be accepted in payment for goods. Napoleon pointed out that if cheap manufactured goods were permitted to flow across the channel into the French markets, French industry would be brought to a standstill and thousands of Frenchmen, in consequence, reduced to beggary—exactly the same arguments of which the Government of the United States has recently made use.

This was a very serious threat to the credit system, because it meant that Lombard Street must pay in gold and silver for the French wines and silks which English-

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men were in the habit of buying. Lombard Street reacted at once, and her reaction became hostility when the First Consul's views about money and monetary systems were made known, and when orders were issued in Paris forbidding the use, by France's debtors, of sterling bills and drafts on London.

"I recognized," Napoleon stated,<sup>1</sup> "this order of importance in the nation's activities—namely, agriculture, industry and foreign trade. Agriculture is the soul, the foundation of the Kingdom; industry ministers to the comfort and happiness of the population; foreign trade is the superabundance. Foreign trade allows of the due exchange of the surplus of agriculture and industry. . . . *Foreign trade, which, in its results, is infinitely inferior to agriculture, was an object of secondary importance in my mind. Foreign trade ought to be the servant of agriculture and industry; these last ought never to be subordinated to foreign trade.*"

These are the principles upon which Mr Roosevelt has now established the economic system of the United States of America. They are simple principles. The secret of the Money Power is *hoardable* money—money, that is to say, which can be withdrawn from markets and which, once withdrawn, cannot be replaced without the banker's consent. So long as money is hoardable or removable in this fashion governments are the slaves of the hoarders, because removal of money from markets means the collapse of those markets. If Finance does not obtain what it wants from government it retaliates,

<sup>1</sup> *Laf Cases: Memorial.*

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like a conjurer, by making the coin disappear out of the box. Prices come tumbling down and the government is attacked instantly by battalions of ruined manufacturers and merchants. It soon capitulates.

Thus the strength of hoardable money (irreplaceable money) lies in its influence on the level of prices. Money that cannot be hoarded or made to vanish—replaceable money—can exert no influence on prices. Consequently, if a government determines that, come what may, it will replace at once in its markets any money that anybody may have taken out of these markets, it is, in effect, making a bid for the control of its own prices and, contrawise, demanding that bankers shall keep their hands off its price-level.

In fact, usury cannot be practised on any important scale unless the control of the price-level is vested in the usurer's hands—unless, that is to say, money can be hoarded or made to vanish by the usurer. This is an absolute rule to which there is no exception. Consequently the moment any statesman or any government tries to introduce unhoardable money (*i.e.* tries to maintain a fixed price-level by replacing money which has been hoarded) the whole strength of the world's money power is mobilized against him. Usury, in such a battle, is fighting for its life, a fact which will be clear to anyone who remembers that hoarding means taking money out of markets whether by investing it abroad, putting it into short-term loans, hiding it away in a stocking, or otherwise disposing of it. A stable price-level enables the producers of goods and service to get out of debt, usurers live by debt.

Napoleon desired that manufacturers should buy

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from farmers and farmers from manufacturers until all the reasonable wants of both had been satisfied. After that, but *only after that*, surplus stocks should be exchanged for the surplus stocks of foreign nations. In other words, the men on the soil and the men in the workshops were to be given wages big enough to enable them to buy almost the whole output of fields and factories. This implies that a balance was to be maintained between agricultural profits and wages and industrial profits and wages—between, that is to say, the prices of agricultural products and the prices of industrial products. A large and relatively stable quantity of money was needed in France to secure this object, and consequently foreign lending was not possible. Nor was foreign borrowing permissible. .

“One has only to consider,”<sup>1</sup> Napoleon stated, “what loans can lead to in order to realize their danger. Therefore I would never have anything to do with them and have always striven against them. At one time people asserted that I did not issue loans because I possessed no credit and could find nobody who would lend me anything. That is quite untrue, and implies a very scanty knowledge of human nature and ignorance of stock exchange methods. Loans were not part of my system.”

It was, of course, at once recognized in all the financial centres, and especially in London, that Napoleon's system constituted a threat of a deadly kind. For if a great country such as France was able to maintain itself in prosperity and to offer its surplus goods for sale in

<sup>1</sup> Las Cases: *Mémoires*.

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the world's markets without reference to the world's usurers, other countries would inevitably be tempted to adopt the same system and so to free themselves from the dreadful pressure and incubus of debt. This danger had existed while the *assignats* retained their value. The destruction of that currency had seemed to have removed the danger by removing unhoardable money. Napoleon, it was evident, must carry out his plans with gold and silver, seeing that nobody in France would accept any other kind of payment. The financiers congratulated themselves that the Consular Government would not be able to obtain the necessary supplies of the precious metals which, in any case, can be hoarded.

They reckoned without their First Consul. He took the field in person against the Austrian army that was threatening to invade France by way of Genoa, and defeated that army at the battle of Marengo. As a result of his victory he obtained from Austria an indemnity in metallic money and secured, at the same time, the rich provinces of Northern Italy. He was thus in a position to lay the foundations of his system.



## CHAPTER XIV

### TRIAL AND ERROR

WHEN, in February 1934, President Roosevelt "pegged" the price-level of the United States with gold, a shout of jubilation went up from the world's bankers. Mr Roosevelt, it was declared, had been forced back to the gold standard. Jubilation was short-lived. At the time of writing (July 1934), the money markets are beginning to understand that "pegging" the exchanges and "pegging" the price-level are two distinct and different enterprises. They are, further, learning that Mr Roosevelt's use of gold is likely to have uncomfortable effects upon their own system and methods, first because gold will become increasingly scarce, and secondly because, as a result of this scarcity, all their currencies (and so all their loans) must be devalued if further and intolerable pressure is not to be brought to bear on agriculture and industry. The President of the United States, in other words, is hoisting the money markets with their own petard. He is using gold to make manifest the evil of the gold-standard system, of hoardable money, and of the private control of the price-level, which, as has been pointed out, is essential to those who lend what they do not possess. That he believes for a moment that gold possesses any special virtue as money is unlikely, for, as must be obvious to anyone who devotes even a few minutes to the consideration of the

subject, it is its use as money (or the basis of money) which makes gold valuable. If gold was no longer in demand as money, its value would be small since its uses are few. But President Roosevelt is too good a student of human nature and of the minds of money-changers to run unnecessary risks. He has the gold; why not use it to the confounding of his enemies? And why not, at the same time, drain away from them their stocks of the "sacred rubbish"? Nothing is quite so certain as that, when the Money Power begins to lose gold on a large scale, it will begin to adopt a cringing as opposed to a bullying attitude.

The President of the United States is in happier case than was Napoleon in the year 1800. Mr Roosevelt has more than £1,000,000,000 in gold under his floor—nearly half the world's stock. Napoleon had a paltry million or two. Nevertheless, the First Consul adopted methods which were essentially the same as those adopted by the President. A world, with the ruin of the *assignats* fresh in mind, held the same views about gold as the world, with the ruin of the German mark fresh in mind, holds to-day. Napoleon, therefore, though he understood perfectly how and why the *assignat* had been ruined, and by whom ruin had been effected, took steps to make his money "sound" according to the bankers' own canons. He took steps, at the same time, to draw gold to Paris in order that the stock secured by his victory at Marengo might be increased. One of these steps was his tariff, another his negotiation with Spain, which, as the owner of Mexico and Peru, was the chief gold-producing country of the world. Spain was in debt to the French Govern-

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ment: the First Consul proposed to effect a debt-settlement which should secure him consignments of gold at regular intervals. His third move was in the direction of Russia. Russian soldiers had co-operated with the Austrians in the Marengo campaign and many of them had fallen into the hands of the French. The First Consul equipped these men with new clothes and sent them back, under escort, to the Emperor Paul of Russia. This gracious act achieved its purpose in turning "Mad Paul," as he was called, towards France and away from England, with which country he was quarrelling about the right of search at sea, the Knights of Malta and other matters. Paul made overtures to Paris and then inaugurated his Baltic policy, the object of which was to exclude British ships from the Baltic and to prevent the entry of British goods into Scandinavia, Denmark, Northern Germany and Russia. British importers of Baltic wheat were thus compelled to pay for their purchases with gold. The price of wheat in England rose sharply, not because wheat was unobtainable<sup>1</sup> but because the financial houses in London were reluctant to lend promises-to-pay, the fulfilment of which was almost certain to be demanded. Lombard Street was determined not to part with a grain of gold which could possibly be preserved in its vaults.

Englishmen needed bread, however, and the only

<sup>1</sup> Many historians have fallen into the error of supposing that Napoleon could have starved England if he had chosen to prohibit the export of wheat instead of prohibiting the import of English goods. Napoleon knew better. England's plight would have excited but little effect as compared with the effect exerted by an outflow of gold. Napoleon knew who the real master was, and had formed his own opinion about the nature of that master.

means of paying for that bread was gold. London, in consequence, found itself severely squeezed for the metal at the very moment when the new supplies arriving in Spain were being diverted to Paris.

In these circumstances, as Napoleon had foreseen, an anxious desire for peace began to manifest itself in financial circles. This desire was shared by the whole English people, though for reasons widely different from those actuating the money-lenders. The English people had suffered already heavy affliction at the hands of its bankers, who, with certain of the noble families, constituted an oligarchy as absolute in power and ruthless in execution as any of which the world holds record. This oligarchy had lured or driven the whole world into its debt and was squeezing the world with ruthless disregard even of human life. The English Parliament uttered no protest against this iniquity. But Parliament began to protest vigorously when the usurers in their turn were squeezed by Napoleon and Paul. Action could not now be deferred on any account. Thus, the peace which was essential to the carrying out of the First Consul's plans became an immediate possibility. Negotiations were opened at Amiens.

While these negotiations were in progress an event occurred that threatened to nullify them. Mad Paul was murdered in his palace one night by a group of officers who were the close associates of his son Alexander. On the following day the British fleet sailed into the Baltic. One of Alexander's first acts as Emperor of Russia was to reverse his father's Baltic policy.

The eagerness for peace of the London bankers underwent an immediate diminution, but too late to present

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an effective obstacle to the Amiens Conference. Preliminaries of peace were accordingly signed. Napoleon had achieved his first objective. He went in state to Notre-Dame to hear a *Te Deum* and compelled his reluctant and sneering staff to accompany him. Madame de Staël, whose overtures had been neglected, shut herself up in her house "so as not to witness the odious spectacle," but the sound of the salute of guns reached her.<sup>1</sup>

This official recognition of the Christian Church was hailed with joy by practically the whole of the French peasantry. It marked the end of the long period of revolutionary wars and of the still longer period of exploitation. France was at peace with the world. She had made her peace, also, with God. Exiles were coming back across her frontiers to share in the new brotherhood of the nation. Christian altars were being rebuilt. Crime and brigandage, everywhere, were diminishing under a strong and just administration of the law. And men felt that these great blessings marked only the beginning. Hope and faith, as ever, attended loyalty. The First Consul's monetary policy was already beginning to bear its good fruit in a lightening of the burden of debt and an increase of productive enterprise. His promise, "Every artisan shall become an artist,"<sup>2</sup> was clearly on the way to fulfilment.

But in the money markets there was uneasiness and anxiety. To-day the connexion between religion and money does not seem to engage the attention of bankers, but, as has been pointed out, it was not thus a century ago. The great masters of money knew that their

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Staël: *Continent*.

<sup>2</sup> Las Cases: *Mémoires*.

## TRIAL AND ERROR

success had depended, in the first instance, on the relaxation by the Christian Church, of its prohibition of usury. They knew that it had been the chief concern of those who had gone before them to corrupt Christian teaching and Christian thought until the revelation of Christ should be obscured and made ineffective. Thanks to these efforts, as has been said, the doctrines of Plato and of the Stoics had become identified with the Christian doctrine which, in consequence, was looked upon by educated persons as a trashy popular edition of a grave philosophy. This is still the view of many educated persons throughout Europe and America, so much so indeed that the statement that a man has strong religious convictions is tantamount, often, to the suggestion that his intellectual equipment is defective.<sup>1</sup>

But the Masters of Money, in the course of their campaign against Christianity, had made a discovery of the importance of which, a century ago, they were still acutely conscious—namely, that the corruption of Christian doctrine is exceedingly difficult, or even impossible, in uneducated minds. The common people, they had found, always hear Christ gladly. Nor were they in doubt about the reason. To such penetrating minds as those of the Medici and the Fuggers it was obvious that the Christian revelation of God, which included the revelation of God made to the Jews, was wholly and completely different from the philosophical speculations of the Athenians. Alone, among all the peoples of the earth, the Jews had proclaimed that God

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noted that Lorenzo di Medici, the great Italian money-lender, said that no man who was not a Platonist could be a good Christian.

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loved them. They had expressed and enshrined this knowledge in their immortal Psalms and had drawn from it the only possible conclusion—namely, that God the Lover must one day, in accordance with the law of love, sacrifice Himself for His Beloved. To the singers of Israel the eternal truths about love were clear. They knew that none can love, be it wife, or father, or mother, or brother, or son, or neighbour, without, in the act and process of love, dying to self and being reborn. God the Father, therefore, could be none other than God the Creator, dead unto Himself, and risen from the dead. They looked, thus, for an outward expression of this spiritual fact—for the coming of the Messiah. God, they argued, with inflexible logic, must fulfil His part as Lover by hastening, no matter at what cost to Himself, to the rescue of His Beloved.

But there had happened to Jewry the same calamity as was later to befall Christianity. The laws of Moses against usury and money-lending were absolute, and were supported by the unanswerable argument that the children of the same Divine Father cannot, without blasphemy, exploit one another's misfortunes. Greedy and corrupt persons found these laws irksome and rebelled against them; at last, in spite of the efforts of the Rabbis to prevent it, the Mosaic law was made of none effect by a series of qualifications.

Inevitably the Jews forsook the pure worship of God the Father and Lover and made for themselves, instead, false gods who were creations of their own intellectual effort, superior persons, rich and powerful, able to reward and able also to punish. Thus the early conception of a Messiah who should be God the Lover

coming to the rescue of His Beloved gave place to the wholly material idea of a powerful conqueror coming to make Jews the overlords of the world.

The same melancholy process of corruption, as has been seen, was destined to take place in the Christian doctrine; Christians in consequence have no right to throw stones at Jews. What is important to realize is that, *in both instances*, a revelation of Love was changed into a human conception of power and wealth, the power of wealth; the wealth of power. God, in short, was rejected in favour of Mammon.

Thus, when Christ proclaimed to the leaders of the Jews that Almighty God, like all His creatures who have loved, had in the act and process of love died unto Himself and been raised from that death as Father, these leaders mocked him, saying,

*"If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross,"*

using language which betrayed their inability to dissociate power, selfishly used, from the conception of Godhood.

It was otherwise with the common folk of Jewry. Instinctively the untutored mind recognizes the great cardinal truth already mentioned—namely, that if God be the Lover of men He must have died for them, seeing that none can truly love without passing immediately through an experience akin to self-death and resurrection from that death. It is easy for simple minds to understand that, for example, the woman who enters a blazing house to save her child is manifesting death unto self which took place at the moment when, long



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before, she became a mother. Love begins with death; love dies daily. Nor does love end, even among the humblest creatures, with rescue from danger. It extends to comfort and teaching so that, when the mother-bird, for instance, is no longer present, her spirit, enshrined in her teaching, may go with and protect her young.

What was hidden, therefore, from the wise and prudent, who had put love away from them, was revealed to babes. The awful spectacle of God's death, "to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block," was truth and salvation to simple minds. God loved them; God had fulfilled in His own Being the law of love as they all, instinctively, knew it and as they recognized it in the lively forms around them—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die. . . ." Love always began with death; love was always death and the resurrection from the dead in unending procession.

The Masters of Money, in short, corrupted the wise and prudent both in Jewry and in Christendom, but did not succeed in corrupting similarly the mass of the people who could not understand their philosophies, but who felt and knew the love of God. The mass of the people is helpless without leadership but irresistible when truly led. It was not enough, therefore, for the Masters of Money to turn educated men away from Christianity. They recognized the contingent necessity of securing at the same time that the mass of the people, who could not be turned away, should be given hireling guides and prevented anywhere from finding a shepherd. The assault on Christianity had been followed by the assault on Christian kings.

The chief engine of this later assault, as has been

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said, was the newspaper Press, almost all the organs of which belonged to, or were closely associated with, the Masters of Money. This "free" Press taught daily the philosophy of usury, a mixture of hedonism and stoicism, of rewards and punishments, of bribes and threats, of greed and fear. Love was identified, carefully, with lust, just as God had been identified with Mammon. Love was, therefore, part of the right men and women possessed to do what they would with their own. Madame de Staël proclaimed her "right to love" from the housetops in Napoleon's Paris, and Theresia Tallien, now the mistress of Ouvrard, the banker, bore child after child to prove her adherence to the same doctrine. The wits in the salons joined with the writers in exalting the importance of the individual, as opposed to the family, thus asserting of Society that it was, at best, an enlightened selfishness, an association for mutual benefit, a commonwealth.

Napoleon took the field against this doctrine and all its evangelists. He instituted a propaganda of his own to counter the bankers' propaganda. And he addressed himself not to the "enlightened" but to the mass of the people.

He acted in this respect according to sincere conviction, which, however, was political rather than personal. No man finds it easy to throw off, immediately, the influence of a philosophy which has dominated the whole procession of his youth. Napoleon was still half-Stoic if he had become half-Christian. He went regularly to Mass and encouraged others to do the same; but he refused to communicate, saying that he believed too little to derive benefit and too much to dare to

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blaspheme.<sup>1</sup> He had arrived at Christianity by a process of trial and error, much as a scientific observer arrives at an hypothesis. He had believed once in Plato; he said now "a good philosopher makes a bad citizen." He had been a Stoic; but he put no trust any longer in severity or fear because, under Robespierre, he had gained experience of both. His knowledge of history, and that Christian upbringing he had received from a devout mother, inclined him, in consequence, towards the system which, during nearly 1000 years, had given Europe stable government and a reasonable measure of prosperity.

"It took cannon," he once remarked bitterly, "to destroy the Feudal System. Ink will do the job for the modern system."<sup>2</sup>

His approach to politics and to economics was similar to his approach to religion. He had held strong opinions once, and all had proved to be fallacies. The time had come to try once more the system which, among all the systems, seemed in the past to have given the best result. In consequence, he adopted the method which John Hunter recommended to Edward Jenner:

"Why think, my dear Jenner? Why not try?"

Napoleon meant to try Christianity, Christian Monarchy and the system that is called, to-day (ignorantly as it happens), economic nationalism. He emptied his mind of theories and studied, instead, the facts which the Revolution had provided—"history, for therein is the only true philo. ophy."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Les Cinq-Mars*, *Mémoires*.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Cinq-Mars*, *lettres*, *Exposition plus facile que le despotisme*.

<sup>3</sup> Napoleon's advice to his son: "Study history, for therein is the only true philosophy."

## TRIAL AND ERROR

He had not advanced far in his experiment when the opposition which it awakened began to assure him that he was on right lines. This opposition, like the policy against which it was armed, was upon three distinct planes—namely, the religious, the political and the economic. The bitterness which characterized the enemies in each of these spheres, and the manner in which they played into one another's hands, left no room in his mind for doubt that he was justified in what he was doing. His religious policy was assailed with special violence, notably by those liberal writers and thinkers whose association with finance—and with London—was closest. Madame de Staël and her lover, Benjamin Constant, were among the leaders of this attack.

"Make haste," wrote Madame de Staël to a friend. "Within a day or two the fellow will have a bodyguard of thousands of priests."

The dangerous suggestion that the First Consul would soon transform himself into a king was whispered about, with the added information that he would reign by right of conquest as military dictator, tyrant, Roman Emperor, "Robespierre on horseback."

## CHAPTER XV

### HERO INTO MONSTER

THE merchant-bankers of the City of London, meanwhile, asked for a trade treaty which would enable them to flood France with cheap English goods. It had already been made clear, during the peace discussions at Amiens, that if satisfactory terms could be reached, England was ready to acknowledge the First Consul as King of France.

Napoleon, in short, occupied during the period of the peace with England a position very like that which was occupied by President Roosevelt in the period between his inauguration and the meeting of the World Economic Conference in London. In the case of President Roosevelt, the Masters of Money had good hope, even expectation, of a satisfactory issue, and this although Mr Roosevelt's inaugural address had caused uneasiness by reason of its references to "money-changers," and his abandonment of the gold standard had suggested war rather than peace. The Masters of Money believed that Mr Roosevelt was acting in an excusable ignorance and would soon change his policy. When that happened, the dollar, it was supposed, would be tied to gold and the American tariff lowered so as to admit cheap English and European goods to the American market.

When, in June 1933, the President of the United

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States rejected this proposal, he was acting, therefore, exactly as the First Consul of the French Republic had acted a century and a quarter earlier. Napoleon refused to make a trade treaty for the same reason that the President of the United States refused—namely, in order that his price-level might not become the plaything of the bankers. The Masters of Money, therefore, found themselves in a position of extreme danger. They had to destroy Napoleon's system or themselves go out of business. Visions of counting-houses glutted with unlendable credit began to haunt them; they prepared for a fight which should have the effect of bringing the upstart Corsican, and his dangerous economic views, to irretrievable ruin.

Napoleon, unlike President Roosevelt, seems to have begun by underestimating the political power of money in countries other than that over which he ruled. He had, for example, when peace with England was signed, sent off almost the whole of his fleet to the West Indies. He had acquired Louisiana in America from Spain and was planning to buy Florida. His army at home was not very well equipped. These actions suggest that he believed that the peace with England would last and that he would be able to carry out his avowed policy of securing "ships, colonies, commerce." He believed, in other words, that no matter what the merchant-bankers might say, the English people would remain friendly to France and unalterably opposed to a new war.

The attack upon him which began, quite suddenly, in the English Press, came therefore as a surprise.<sup>1</sup> He protested, through his ambassador, and was told that

<sup>1</sup> See Coquelle : *Napoleon and England*.

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in England the Press was free. As he had himself, at the time of the campaign of Marengo, set up a severe censorship of the Press in Paris, which had not been relaxed, this was in the nature of a rebuke from free men to a dictator. It was clear that the English Government had not overlooked the unconstitutional manner of the First Consul's coming to power or the many difficulties which that unhappy incident had brought in its train. Though the whole French people, almost without dissentient voice, had endorsed the Consulate<sup>1</sup> and made Napoleon ruler for life, the stain of the attack on the deputies at St Cloud remained. "Because you have muzzled your Press," the English replies to his protests suggested, "it does not follow that we ought to do likewise. Unlike you, perhaps, we have nothing to hide."

It was idle, in the circumstances, to object that the chief organs of the English Press reflected faithfully the views of the merchant-bankers, and that, consequently, the English Press was muzzled just as effectually as was the French Press—seeing that views opposed to those of the bankers had no chance of being heard outside of a small circle of readers. It could be pointed out—and it was pointed out—that in one day<sup>2</sup> sixty-one Paris newspapers had ceased publication by order of the Consular Government. Napoleon was called tyrant and

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon made use of the system of the Referendum, which is always assailed by the Masters of Money as "undemocratic"—because it is a direct appeal to the people and so cannot be controlled as a Parliamentary majority can be. The votes cast against him in these referenda were so few as to be negligible, even granting that "one vote against signified as much as 100 votes for."

<sup>2</sup> The day on which Napoleon left Paris to conduct the campaign which ended at Marengo. All nations exert a censorship of the Press during a war.

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despot. This man, the English people were warned, means to dominate the world. He is already in possession of Holland and of Northern Italy. Switzerland is under his heel. Are these not the great banking centres of Europe? Undoubtedly, if he is able, he will turn the Mediterranean into a French lake and so reconquer Egypt and secure a way to India across the Isthmus of Suez. While there is yet time, therefore, let us keep the island of Malta.

These arguments were effectively countered by Charles James Fox in a speech in the House of Commons, in which he urged that the obligation in the Treaty of Amiens to evacuate Malta ought to be fulfilled, and in which he used these words:

“Must we then, to gratify the ambition of our merchants, spill torrents of British blood? . . . I had rather blood should flow for romantic expeditions like that of Alexander, than for the gross cupidity of a few merchants greedy after gold.”

The arguments were further countered, as has been said, by the absence from European waters of the whole French fleet and by the plans to colonise Louisiana and Florida. But such considerations did not avail against the misery and exasperation caused by the growing trade depression and unemployment in England, the chief cause of which, as the English people were assured, was “Bonaparte’s” tariff and the consequent loss of the export trade. The Masters of Money could have relieved the depression by a stroke of the pen had they been willing to allow Englishmen to consume their own goods. But that policy—Napoleon’s policy and now



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Mr Roosevelt's policy—means giving buying-power to the home market by, among other means, raising wages. The Masters of Money were looking forward to the day when their system of setting one nation against another in a race for cheapness (and so for big profits for themselves) would be restored. They were determined, meanwhile, that men and women should not experience the blessings of the opposite system, and so, in their enlightenment, make an end of financial control. Pitt, therefore, while blaming "Bonaparte," hinted that the way out of the depression lay in a vigorous foreign policy. "The war," it was declared, "was our best customer." That cry was taken up by the whole Press of England.

Thus interests of a wide variety of types were mobilized against the French ruler. Men of liberal sympathies were invited to remember the attack on the deputies, the suppression of the newspapers and the conquests in Holland and Piedmont. Tories, on the other hand, were urged to recall the death of Louis XVI and the proscription of the nobles. Was not this Bonaparte the child of the Revolution? Was he not usurper as well as tyrant? He had come by the sword; sooner or later he would take to the sword once more. Why wait until he had built a great fleet and mobilized a great army?

Meanwhile, preparations were going forward for a European coalition against France. Pitt calculated that an allied army of half a million men could be put into the field; the British navy could be relied on, at the same time, to isolate France from all her colonial possessions. Napoleon, as advised from London, saw

his hopes of putting his theories of government into practice in a peaceful way growing fainter, and made a last despairing effort to save the situation. But since he would neither make a trade treaty nor accept loans from London this effort was foredoomed to failure.

The negotiations, both in Paris and London, grew more and more embittered, and at last broke down altogether. War against the "Corsican ogre" was declared by England.

## CHAPTER XVI

### BLOOD ROYAL

THE issue was now joined between true Democracy and Money Power—that is to say, between a people with a leader who commanded their loyalty and a people governed exclusively in the interests of a small caste of international bankers, concerned primarily neither with England nor France, but only with their system of lending what they did not possess. The bankers' object, seeing that Napoleon would not come to terms with them, was to conquer him by force of arms either within France herself or in foreign war. To this end, as has been said, they painted him as tyrant and ogre, a human monster lacking the bowels of compassion and concerned only to plunder the unhappy people over whom he ruled. This assumption by the Masters of Money of an excellent moral worth had, for long, been an important element in their policy and remains to this day characteristic of their activities. Those who oppose and criticize the financial system seldom keep their characters unbesmirched. Usually they are held up to contempt as greedy self-seekers or persons of an unnatural cunning or simply immoral persons. Napoleon became "Corsican rat" and "Jacobin," and terrible stories of his depravity were told and believed all over Europe, and are still told and believed in English households where honest folk, day by day, absorb the moral teachings of

International Finance. The war to force loans upon France and to destroy her agriculture and industry for the benefit of the world's usurers assumed, therefore, the character of a holy crusade to restore liberty and peace to mankind.

But the crusade was somewhat slow in beginning, because the champions chosen by Money (Austria, Russia and Prussia) refused to take the field until large loans had been made to them. The Masters of Money shrank from adventuring their promises-to-pay to governments whose security was doubtful. In the circumstances it seemed better to give some comparatively cheap help to the Royalist exiles in England and to the Royalists of La Vendée in order that a civil war might be fomented in France. An attempt, as it happened, had already been made on Napoleon's life by means of an infernal machine meant to be exploded under his carriage in Paris. This attempt had been brought home to the Royalists and, notably, to their agent, Georges Cadoudal. Cadoudal was now in England, in receipt of a pension from the English Government. He became active once more in association with General Pichegru, who also was in exile because he had sold his country for money during the Revolutionary wars.<sup>1</sup> These two built up a line of communication through Normandy to Paris and began to form a new plot for the abduction and murder of the First Consul. Some of the conspirators were transported across the Channel in an

<sup>1</sup> The facts about Pichegru are fully set forth in *General Pichegru's Treason*, by Sir John Hall. (Smith Elder.) Napoleon warned the English Government about Cadoudal when England and France were at peace. (Coquelle: *Napoleon and England*.)

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English warship under the command of Captain Wright.

This was much less expensive, undoubtedly, than financing Austria or Prussia or Russia, especially as these countries usually demanded gold and silver when loans were made to them. It was also much more advantageous, seeing that, if Napoleon could be got out of the way, it would be easy to place "Louis XVIII" on the throne of his ancestors, and set up in France that financial constitutionalism which, in England, had already brought the whole nation into subjection.

Napoleon saw clearly what was coming and set about completing his defences. These, as has been said, consisted of the restoration of Christian monarchy; of the subjugation to this power of all other powers in the State, including the Money Power; of the inculcation of the ideal of loyalty, and so of the idea of willing service, of God and man; finally, of the development of an economic system designed to secure to every citizen the means of sustaining his dignity as man and Christian. Napoleon now added a new element. He resolved that his coronation should be a signal act of consecration not of himself only but of the whole French people. He would make it manifest to the world that sovereign and people were one, and that, in consequence, the monarchy which he was establishing was no dictatorship of party or of arms, but that venerable system of government which had been the outstanding contribution of the Christian era to the political development of mankind, in that it offered to the weak protection against the strong, and held all men, however powerful, in subjection and service to their fellows

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without, at the same time, diminishing any man's personal liberty to offer an ever nobler service, or taking from the people the right to set up representative bodies and to control their own destinies. Napoleon wrote to the Pope: <sup>1</sup>

"MOST HOLY FATHER,—

"The happy effect produced upon the morality and character of my people by the re-establishment of religion, induces me to beg Your Holiness to give me a new proof of your interest in my destiny and in that of this great nation in one of the most important moments presented by the annals of the world. I beg you to come and give, to the highest degree, a religious character to the anointing and coronation of the first Emperor of the French. That ceremony will acquire a new lustre from being performed by Your Holiness in person. It will bring down upon ourself and our people the blessing of God, whose decrees rule the destiny alike of Empires and of families.

"Your Holiness is aware of the affectionate feelings I have long borne you and can thus judge of the joy that this opportunity of again displaying them will afford me.

"And hereupon, we pray God that He may preserve you, most Holy Father, for many years to rule and govern our mother, the Holy Church.

"Your dutiful son,

"NAPOLEON."

Pius VII had not forgotten the young general of Italy. He had concluded already a Concordat with the French and had seen that people return within the fold of Holy Church. Nevertheless, he experienced some hesitations. Since the Concordat had been signed war had begun once more in Europe and Napoleon had become

<sup>1</sup> Thiers : *History of the Consulate and Empire.*

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again the object of execration and even of horror owing to the manner in which he had reacted to the plot against his life organized by Georges Cadoudal. The Pope, in this matter, appears to have taken a much more enlightened view than was taken by most of the European sovereigns and to have done Napoleon the justice of recognizing that the weapon of assassination places those who resort to its use beyond the pale of ordinary dealing. The Emperor of Russia, in particular, was making a great deal of the trial and execution of the young duc d'Enghien of the blood royal of France, which had been carried out by Napoleon's orders, though this unfortunate young man had not, certainly, been involved in Cadoudal's plot, and indeed was living, when arrested, in foreign territory. But d'Enghien had applied for a commission in the English army with the avowed purpose of fighting against Napoleon, and was consequently associated with those whose friends had made the plot possible. Had the plot succeeded he would have come at once to Paris to assist in the restoration of the Monarchy.

It has been urged during more than a century that opposition to Napoleon by a prince of the House of Bourbon was no crime against France. From the point of view of the House of Bourbon that is doubtless true. From Napoleon's point of view, on the contrary, the crime was self-evident, seeing that the French people had chosen him as their sovereign. He saw in the Bourbons now only the catspaw of the international money-lenders, his and France's enemies. He alone stood between the French people and these enemies, and his life, therefore, was the sole guarantee of salva-

tion. He felt it to be incumbent upon him further to show the world that his kingdom was real and that no counter-claim, based upon heredity, could be tolerated for a moment. Those who struck at him, struck at France.

It is only necessary to recall that the hire of the carriage in which, ten years later, Louis XVIII drove into Paris was paid by the Rothschilds in order to be assured of the justice of this opinion. The Bourbons, as has been said, had become the pawns of Finance and had lent their royal blood to further the interests of usury. They had, in consequence, abdicated kingship. It is significant that Napoleon never expressed regret for his severity towards d'Enghien, though he often called the young man unhappy and unfortunate. On his death-bed at St Helena he wrote, deliberately, into his will a sentence in which he declared that, given the same circumstances, he would act again in the same way.

His view of his own kingship, in short, had not changed with his downfall. The Bourbons—unlike Louis XVI—based their claim to the throne of France on blood and on blood alone. They could, on this showing, become officers in foreign armies, the governments of which were at war with France, or become the recipients of pensions from private money-lenders whose object was gain, without in any way alienating their rights. They could do what they chose, in other words, no matter what the effects of their actions might be upon the French people, for France belonged to them and could not, lawfully, be taken from them. Young d'Enghien held this view quite sincerely. When his



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father wrote to him to warn him that he was not safe at Baden he replied:

“There, where danger is, is the post of honour for a Bourbon. At this moment, when the order of the Privy Council of His Britannic Majesty has summoned the *émigrés* to the banks of the Rhine, I cannot, whatever may happen, abandon these worthy and loyal defenders of the French Monarchy.”<sup>1</sup>

In Napoleon's view this Bourbon idea of kingship was foreign to the true conception of Monarchy. It belonged in time to the pre-Christian age and in form to the system of which the Revolutionists had been the exponents. The Bourbons were setting up as party leaders. They were Royalists, as opposed to Jacobins or Liberals. In the last issue, a party is usually open to offers of foreign help because its members feel that its principles justify any steps necessary to make them effective.

It was obvious that the man who had won the loyalty and trust of the French people, and so become their leader and King, could not compromise with party chiefs who disputed the right of the French to give their loyalty and trust to whom they willed, especially at a moment when these party chiefs were planning his own destruction, whether by assassination, as in the case of Cadoudal and Pichegru and the Comte d'Artois, or by open attack, as in the case of d'Enghien. Just as it would have been necessary to take arms against a disciple of Robespierre who had come marching at the head of a mob, so it was necessary to take arms against

<sup>1</sup> Thiers: *History of the Consulate and Empire*.

## BLOOD ROYAL

the leaders of the Royalist party. To have pardoned d'Enghien would, he thought, have been to acknowledge that Bourbon blood was superior to other blood, seeing that no ordinary citizen who, in time of war, was avowedly acting for the enemy, would have been pardoned. D'Enghien was tried and shot for high treason exactly as Roger Casement was tried and hanged in London during the Great War. It was thus made plain that the only substantial claim to the throne of France was the loyalty of the French people.

"These Bourbons," said Napoleon, "fancy that they may shed my blood like that of some vile animal; and yet my blood is quite as valuable as theirs. . . . I will suffer no affront from any prince on the face of this earth. I will pitilessly shoot the very first of those Bourbon princes who shall fall into my hands. The Royalists stand in need of a warning. It is better to make one stern and striking example than to punish ten minor tools. After that we can afford to be merciful again."

And at St Helena, seventeen years later, in the presence of death, he wrote:

"I caused the duc d'Enghien to be arrested and tried because that step was essential to the safety, interest and honour of the French people, when the Comte d'Artois was maintaining, by his own confession, sixty assassins in Paris. In similar circumstances I would act in the same way."

The defence is valid. Nevertheless, mercy is so excellent a prerogative of kingship, that it is arguable that

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Napoleon would have done better to pardon d'Enghien than to shoot him. Again, perhaps, the fatal seizure of power at St Cloud darkened judgment by intensifying the sense of insecurity. To have forgiven the Bourbons might, no doubt, have been construed as a confession of weakness; Napoleon was strong enough to have taken the risk. In upholding the true kingship against the false, he stumbled upon the very obstacle which he was most anxious to avoid—namely, the spirit of party. Fouché's bitter taunt about the execution of the young duke: "It was worse than a crime; it was a blunder," was not wholly wide of the mark.

The incident is important not because of its political results, which have been exaggerated, but because it reveals an abiding weakness in Napoleon's character—namely, the fear of seeming to be weak. In a party leader that fear is always justified; in a King never. It was not, indeed, until the man actually had become weak, as in the campaign of 1814 and during the return from Elba, that the full extent of his strength was made manifest. Even his enemies, in these days, recognized that his throne had been built upon the hearts of his people.

The Pope set aside such feelings as the execution of the duc d'Enghien had awakened in his mind. He came to Paris and consecrated the new Emperor at a moment when a coalition of all the European powers was being formed for his destruction.

## CHAPTER XVII

### MAGIC

LIKE the House of Bourbon, most of the European monarchies, at the time of Napoleon's ascent of the French throne, had become party leaderships rather than leaderships of the people. They had reverted, that is to say, to the pre-Christian form of monarchy, the essence of which is heredity—blood, and the support of which is provided by an hereditary nobility or class of patricians. Since most of the nobles were sunk in debt to money-lenders, the Kings reigned to a large extent by grace of usury.

The French Revolution had produced upon these Kings and their nobles an effect of dismay and fear, which found expression in a growing determination to resist to the utmost every kind of popular demand. Like modern dictators, the crowned heads of Europe busied themselves to stamp out opposition and to get rid of opponents. They continued to cast anxious glances at Paris, whence had come for them so many afflictions, nor were they reassured by the advent of the Corsican. Napoleon, in their view, was little better than a thief. He had burgled the throne of France, using as a pretext for that act of brigandage a popular election which could have no validity outside of the Jacobin Club.

So far, indeed, had the reigning families of Austria

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and Prussia and other smaller States departed from the Christian conception of Monarchy, that they were wholly unable to grasp the reasons which had brought the Pope to Paris, and experienced a lively indignation against the Holy See. The Pope, as they believed, was supporting rebels whose hands were stained with royal blood. He was encouraging in the popular mind the idea that a nation had the right to dispose of its own destiny. Such an attitude constituted a threat to the foundations of the hereditary principle and so to the bases of their own power. The Kings had no hesitation, therefore, in accepting financial help from London to enable them to attack the French Emperor. Thus there was formed against Napoleon an alliance of the Houses of Hapsburg, Hohenzollern; Bourbon, Orange, Romanoff, Hanover, Baring, Hope and, later, Rothschild, to say nothing about those of Ouvrard, Cabarrus, Necker and others less important. On the face of it, it seemed as if these monarchs and their money-lenders were upholding the ancient office against profane attack, whereas, actually, they were concerned to prevent a restoration of that ancient office. Usury had nothing to fear from the tribal chieftainships into which the monarchies of Europe had degenerated, nor had these party leaders anything to fear, so far as they could see, from usury; both, on the contrary, knew themselves menaced by Napoleon.

Napoleon, on his part, soon discovered that the Kings would have nothing to do with his kingship.

"In the great cause in which I saw myself the chief and arbiter," he told Las Cases at St Helena,<sup>1</sup> "one

<sup>1</sup> *Las Cases : Memorial.*

## MAGIC

of two systems was to be followed: either to make Kings listen to reason from their people, or to conduct the peoples to happiness by means of their Kings. But it is well known to be no easy matter to check the people when once they are in full cry; it seemed to me, therefore, more reasonable to count on the wisdom and intelligence of rulers. I supposed I had a right to believe that these rulers were possessed of enough intellect to see where their true interests lay. I was wrong. The Kings gave no thought to the position in which they stood, and, in their blind fury, let loose against me forces (of popular hatred) which I had studiously refrained from arousing against them."

Napoleon never ceased to wonder at this attitude, for he saw that, if he could be got out of the way, the Kings would immediately become the creatures of the money-lenders. (How true was this vision may be grasped by anyone who chooses to read Conti's *Rise of the House of Rothschild*.) The watchful grey eyes of the Corsican had observed that most of the great promise-lenders professed liberal views and spoke with lofty scorn about the claims of blood, calling these claims "an outworn magic." Could the Kings not see that they were being used as catpaws? Or that, if they offered resistance in days to come, short work would be made of them?

History has now borne witness to the soundness of this judgment. Napoleon's fall was the signal throughout Europe for a sustained attack on "privilege" and "Feudalism," which in the end has destroyed all the great thrones and established in their place financial democracy or financial dictatorship. That was in-

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evitable, certainly, from the beginning, though few, except Napoleon, realized that it was inevitable. A kingship based on blood and the legitimacy of blood is a form of primitive magic by which the symbol is made to take the place of that which is symbolized—namely, the “King-thought,” the power to lead after the fashion of a good father. Thanks to the cult of reason, men had been taught to disbelieve in magic. The ruin of the Kings, while they clung to their blood-fetish, was certain.

It was the more certain, because the promise-lenders had a magic of their own which they were determined to foist upon the world—namely, that a man can lend what he does not possess, or, as Professor Soddy has ably said, “can eat his cake and have it.” Obviously an attack upon “blood” and “blood privilege” was an excellent way of blinding men’s eyes to the greater fraud which, under cover of that attack, was being perpetrated upon them. The promise-lenders’ magic, unlike the King’s magic, appealed to millions of men and women, who were invited to believe that, if only they made use of their reason, they could be free of their masters and could inherit the earth. In campaigns of hatred against priests and Kings the important fact was bound to be overlooked until too late, that no man is free so long as another man possesses the power to inflict starvation upon him.

Napoleon, in short, was restoring not kingship but Christian kingship, which is the enemy of privilege, whether of breed or class. It was inevitable, therefore, that he should be opposed by Kings concerned about the magic of blood privileges, by financial Liberals with

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their magic of freedom without food, by the Jacobins with their class magic and by the promise-lenders. The Kings called him usurper; the Liberals, tyrant; the Jacobins (always partial to blood privilege) *bourgeois*. And all these parties, seeking eagerly to overthrow him, turned to the financiers for help. Armies began to march against France; the sons and daughters of financial liberalism spent their wits in holding up to ridicule the "dynasty of Ajaccio"; Jacobins, raised to public office, abused secretly the "Emperor of the Prætorians." And meanwhile, in Paris, Ouvrard, acting for International Finance, prepared a pitfall into which, as he believed, the Corsican and all his schemes, must inevitably fall.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### ECONOMIC BLIZZARD

It is instructive, at the present time, to compare the methods employed by the Masters of Money against Napoleon with those made use of against the President of the United States of America. Napoleon, like President Roosevelt, was attempting, as has been said, to secure to his people the great blessing of stable prices. It is a fact of history that the Masters of Money invariably meet such an attempt by threatening to destroy the currency of the offending government, so that farmers and others will no longer part with their goods in exchange for it. Governments soon capitulate when face to face with this dreadful threat, for the food supplies of the towns are cut off, and famished mobs, like wild beasts, fill the streets.

The ruin of a currency, however, cannot always be brought about by direct means. The *assignat* retained its value under the iron rule of Robespierre, because none dared to refuse to accept it in exchange for goods. It lost its value only when that iron rule was broken, and when, in addition, the lure of gold and silver was dangled before the sellers of goods. In America, after the War, when various attempts were begun to secure stable prices, the dollar was buttressed by an enormous stock of gold, which, on the financiers' own showing, made it

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"sound money." It was impossible, therefore, to attack the dollar directly.

It was impossible, too, to employ most of the methods of indirect attack which experience had shown to be effective, because America was in the special and peculiar position of being the creditor of the whole world, with no external debts. In such circumstances the only way to get control of the American price-level was to influence that price-level by means of the general price-level of the whole world.

It should be remembered in this respect that a price-level is a composite structure. It comprises many prices of many commodities, and all these prices exert influence upon one another. If some prices rise others must fall, so long as the general level is kept steady. If, for example, the prices of food-stuffs fall, then the prices of manufactured goods will be forced up just as one end of a see-saw is forced up when the other end is depressed. A government which is trying to keep the whole broad level of its prices stable must, therefore, take special care to see that the separate elements of that level are not disturbed. The weakness of the American position lay in the fact that America was a large exporter of farm produce—namely, wheat, cotton, sugar and tobacco. All these commodities possess world prices to which every producer is compelled to conform.

When it was suspected, therefore, that the American Government meant to retain control of the American price-level—meant, that is to say, to exclude foreign goods, while at the same time demanding payment of War and other debts—an attitude of pained surprise was

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displayed in the world's money markets, including Wall Street. These money markets understood that the dollar, being a gold currency, was subject to the laws of hoarding as applied to gold. In other words, if the Americans absorbed gold other countries must—to a corresponding degree—lose that metal and—their currencies also being gold currencies—must, correspondingly, restrict the quantity of the money in their markets. The whole world was in debt to America; the whole world was sending gold to America. Consequently, the whole world would be drained of buying-power, as from an open vein. World prices, in consequence, would fall to very low levels, bringing down with them, in their fall, American prices of farm products.

The American Government had only one possible answer to this challenge, provided that it was determined to maintain its price-level—namely, to cut down at once its production of farm goods so that the home market would be able to absorb them all. There were grave difficulties in the way of so resolute a policy. The Government did not face these difficulties and, consequently, began to drift towards a disaster, which all the money markets clearly and jubilantly foresaw, and which, indeed, so long as the world's currencies were tied to gold, was inevitable. (The money markets, be it noted, did nothing to precipitate the American crisis except to urge that all the world's currencies should be tied firmly to gold. When that had been accomplished the Masters of Money could fold their hands and await, peacefully, the hour of triumph.)

This hour was approaching in the apparently pros-

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perous days of 1929. It was observed in America that, though the general level of prices remained stable, the prices of farm goods had begun to fall. This discovery occasioned a lively anxiety in Government circles, but anxiety was tempered to some extent by the fact that the fall in the prices of farm goods had apparently no adverse effect on the prices of manufactured goods. On the contrary, the prices of manufactured goods were booming. What was not seen was that, so long as the general price-level remained stable this boom in manufactured goods prices was bound to occur. One end of the see-saw, namely, the farm goods end, had fallen; consequently the other end of the see-saw, namely, the manufactured goods end, had been forced up.

The American farmer was now getting less for the goods he sold and was being compelled to pay more for the goods he bought. Naturally he began to cry out for relief. The Government became more and more alarmed, and, on the erroneous assumption that, if it poured out enough money, farm prices were bound to rise, began to expand the basis of credit. This action, however, could have no influence on world prices. These remained obstinately depressed. Consequently, and as a direct result of the outpouring of the new money, the prices of manufactured goods in America rose to fresh heights. A speculative boom in the shares of the companies producing these manufactured goods now began. It was fed by the new money and reached colossal proportions at a time when the incomes of the farmers were steadily ebbing away—when, in short, the buying-power upon which in the long run every manufacturer necessarily depends, was disappearing. The

Wall Street Crash of 1929 was the inevitable end of this process. The crash caused manufacturers to close down their works and dismiss their men, and thus, owing to unemployment, a further reduction of buying-power was brought about. Farmers now began to destroy their crops rather than accept the miserable prices offered, and the spectre of famine stalked through a land of overflowing plenty. Demand for further increases in the quantity of money became vociferous, "inflation" and "reflation" being named as the panacea of depression. But every attempt to pump money into the markets met with the same fate. The new money exerted no influence on the prices of farm goods, because the world prices of these goods remained depressed; it tended, on the contrary, to make the farmers' position still more desperate by causing spasmodic bursts of activity in the markets for manufactured goods and for metals, and so raising the prices of the things the farmer had to buy. But the lesson was lost on the farmers. They continued to cry for "greenback inflation" and the monetization of silver, and, since they were in a position to inflict starvation on the towns, the Government gave ear to them. Early in 1933 farmers' strikes broke out all over the United States, while the agitation for inflation became deafening. America was now on the brink of the abyss. She had already increased the basis of her credit so substantially that rumours that the dollar was no longer "sound" began to run. In consequence hoarding of gold on a great scale took place and was soon supplemented by hoarding of dollars. This hoarding, added to the rumours of unsoundness, caused a run on the banks, when, at

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usual, it was discovered that the promise-lenders were without the money necessary to the fulfilment of their promises. The banks began to shut their doors.

The event for which the Masters of Money had been waiting during nearly ten years had now taken place. A tremendous flight from the dollar into private hoards and foreign securities and bank balances had shaken that currency to its foundations so that nobody wished to possess it. If the Government yielded to the farmers' demands for greenbacks, the dollar would certainly crash and go the way of the *assignat* and the mark. On the other hand, if their demands were refused, the farmers might, and probably would, bring the towns to starvation. Either way a moment was in sight when supplies of food would no longer be available—since no one, who can help it, is going to part with goods in exchange for a falling currency. The Masters of Money stretched out their hands to grasp their prize. Now, at last, America would "listen to reason," wipe out the War Debts, reduce her tariff and abandon all attempts to take the control of the price-level into her own hands. President Roosevelt, according to these masters, was the strong man whose office it would be to make an end of the opposition to sound finance and to hand America over, gagged and bound, to international usury.

Seldom has a calculation been less well founded. No sooner was the new President come to the White House than, as has been seen, he denounced the "money-changers," closed those banks which remained open and, a few weeks later, took America off the gold standard, after having compelled the hoarders of gold

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and currency to disgorge. The effect was to raise all prices from some 60 per cent. of their 1931 level to some 120 per cent. of that level. But the battle for control had still to be fought, for the see-saw was still heavily tipped against the farmers. The Money Power, when it had recovered from its first shock of surprise, remembered that the visible stocks of wheat and other commodities were still much greater than a world, whose buying-power had been so severely cut down, could absorb, and noted further that so long as a substantial number of countries remained on the gold standard at the old parities, buying-power was not likely to increase very much.

When, therefore, in April 1934, farm prices all over the world and also in America underwent a new fall, complacency was restored. Once again the unfortunate American farmer found himself in the position with which he was so bitterly familiar—namely, strangled as regards his income and mulcted as regards his expenditure. Inevitably the demands for inflation, for greenbacks, for the monetization of silver, were revived. Congress prepared to act, and it was confidently asserted that the President's policy had failed. But once again Mr Roosevelt surprised his opponents. His timely publication of the names of the holders of silver, some of whom were well known in Wall Street, so alarmed the farmers as to bring their campaign to an end. Congress then made the silver bill permissive instead of mandatory—in other words, the President was given power to do whatever he chose. Meanwhile the farmers were learning, slowly, that the only permanent salvation for them lay in adjusting the size of their crop to the

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needs of the American people, and thus making an end of their dependence on foreign markets. Mr Roosevelt saw a long and weary fight in front of him; but he went forward to it with good heart.

And suddenly his difficulties were smoothed as if by a direct intervention of Providence. A great drought fell on the world, and in a few weeks wrought havoc with the wheat crops not only in the United States but also in Canada and the continent of Europe. The price of wheat rose sharply (with a corresponding fall in the prices of manufactured goods) and the stranglehold of the Money Power over the American price-level was diminished.

The importance of this deliverance cannot be exaggerated, for it is doubtful now if Finance can rehabilitate itself. America is no longer a seller of wheat. She is thus in control of the elements of her price-level as well as of the price-level itself. She can now, in consequence, proceed with the development of her home market up to the point of saturation, and thereafter exchange her surplus for those foreign goods of which she may stand in need. If this policy is not defeated, all other nations, sooner or later, will mark America's great prosperity and follow her example, and Napoleon's economic system will become, at last, the policy of the whole world. The agony of the nineteenth century, its shame of poverty and slums and child labour, will be expunged.

The attack upon America, and especially upon President Roosevelt, is only, as has been said, a modern instance of a long series of attacks directed to the same object in the same circumstances. Napoleon, like the





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Napoleon's suspicion.<sup>1</sup> But the Emperor's plight was so dangerous that he could not afford to dispense with Ouvrard's services, and had to content himself with a warning about the man addressed to his Finance Ministry on the eve of his departure from Paris to take command of his army. Ouvrard continued to buy the Spanish bills and the tax-collectors' bills as they became available, and the money so provided was sent off, at once, to the Emperor, who kept clamouring for it.

Meanwhile Ouvrard had paid a visit to Spain on a mission of his own. The upshot of this mission was that he became virtually an agent of the Spanish Crown in the matter of gold shipments from Peru and Mexico. Spain, as the ally of France, declared war on England, with the inevitable result that the treasure-ships coming from America were seized by the English navy and taken into English ports.<sup>2</sup> All hope that any more gold would reach Paris from the other side of the Pyrenees was extinguished.

In these circumstances Ouvrard professed a great anxiety. He had bought the Spanish promises-to-pay gold and the Spaniards clearly could not fulfil their

<sup>1</sup> Ouvrard, in his later life, boasted that he had lent Napoleon money against Napoleon's will.

<sup>2</sup> See Thiers: *History of the Consulate and Empire*. Thiers wrote as a man convinced of the excellence of the credit system, and consequently his account of the business is as favourable as possible to the money interest. He shows clearly how cleverly the banker Ouvrard worked in Spain, and how rich were the rewards reaped both by Ouvrard himself and by Lombard Street. The Spanish Government was never, at any time, hostile to London, though war had been officially declared. It is necessary, as always when dealing with the Masters of Money, to see the scheme whole. Ouvrard's work in Spain helped to secure the Spanish gold for London; it opened the way to the battle of Trafalgar; it exerted a strong influence on Napoleon's activities in Austria—and so on. Not one blow, but many blows, were being struck simultaneously.

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promises. He announced that he could discount no more bills of any kind, no matter how urgent might be the demand for money. The announcement came at the moment when Napoleon was closing with the allied armies of Russia and Austria beyond the Rhine. The French Emperor had sent couriers to Paris demanding more money as a matter of extreme urgency, and his Treasury trembled to refuse him. But where was the money to come from? A new appeal was made, therefore, to Ouvrard. The banker replied that he might perhaps be able to help if he had the assurance that the money collected as taxation, but lying still in the hands of the tax-collectors, was made over to him as soon as it reached Paris. So urgent was the necessity that this demand was agreed to.

Ouvrard now held the French bills which he had discounted before Napoleon's going. These bills were due to be paid when the tax-collectors brought their money to the Bank of France. But Ouvrard, unbeknown to the Bank of France, was obtaining possession of the tax-collectors' money and thus emptying the till from which ultimately the paper in his hands was due to be redeemed. The Bank of France was being broken, secretly, for there was no hope now of obtaining any fresh supplies of gold from Spain—or indeed from anywhere else.

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discovered that it did not possess the means of paying—since the taxes had already been made over to Ouvrard. There was, consequently, nothing for it but to print large quantities of bank-notes and make payment by means of them. Agents of the Bank were sent hurrying into the Low Countries to buy any gold upon which they could lay their hands, but, since all they had to offer in exchange were the newly printed notes, their mission was largely unsuccessful.

Napoleon, meanwhile, had entered Vienna without destroying the Austrian army. The combined forces of Austria and Russia, under the Emperors Francis and Alexander, were waiting to give him battle, while the Prussian Army menaced his communications. Prussia had not yet declared war, but could be relied upon to do so the moment the French suffered a reverse. Thus there was financial ruin already accomplished in Paris, ruin upon the high seas, and a lively prospect of ruin either on the Moravian plain at the hands of Francis and Alexander with their much superior forces, or at those of King Frederick William, in command of the army of Frederick the Great, on the lines of communication. Napoleon's destruction seemed well assured. But at Austerlitz he defeated and destroyed the Austrian and Russian armies.

Only that complete and overwhelming triumph could have saved him, for at home panic was unleashed. Ouvrard, having compelled the Bank of France to print notes far in excess of its holding of the precious metals, had now organized a run on the Bank. Terrified customers were demanding payment in gold and silver and being told that such payment could not possibly

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be made. Food prices were rising to impossible heights because the farmers could scarcely be induced to part with their goods in exchange for the paper-money, of which everyone was so desperately anxious to be rid. At the end of a week of deepening gloom and despair, Napoleon's bank closed its doors.

But upon this darkness the "sun of Austerlitz" rose serene and splendid. The Emperor had vanquished his enemies. He had destroyed the coalition of the powers of Europe; he had won peace; the rich treasure of Austria, the "English gold" which had made the war possible, would be his for indemnity. In an hour Paris passed from consternation to triumph. The paper-money, with its new backing of victory, was accepted eagerly.

"Roll up the map of Europe," said the dying Pitt when news of the battle reached him; "it will not be wanted for many years."

Napoleon knew better. What he had won was salvation from immediate ruin—a breathing-space. There could be no permanent compromise between his system and that of the money-lenders. One or other, sooner or later, must be utterly destroyed.

## BOOK III

### THE MASTER BUILDER

“When I was in France during the War, our boys used to call the United States ‘God’s Own Country.’ Let us so make it, and let us so keep it.”

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT : “Wireless Address,”  
July 1934.



## CHAPTER XIX

### TREASURE

AN idea exists in the public mind that the ways of High Finance are too difficult and complicated to be understood by ordinary men. This is very far indeed from the truth. The whole structure of finance, as has been said, is built on the simple fact of the control, by the financiers, of the level of prices. "The hand that gives," said Napoleon grimly, "is above the hand that receives." When creditors have it in their power to prevent debtors from ever getting out of debt—by controlling the prices which these debtors can obtain—then the creditors are in permanent and absolute possession.

The system of lending promises-to-pay what the lender does not possess is made possible, let it be repeated, by the lenders' control of the price-level, for this control secures that the fulfilment of the promises will not be demanded. It is obvious, for example, that if a loan of promises has been made to an English firm at a moment when English prices are higher than German prices, the English firm will tend to buy what it needs not in England but in Germany. This will entail the purchase of marks with pounds—or with gold. If the exchange has become unfavourable by reason of many similar transactions, the lender may be asked to furnish pounds—not merely his promises-to-



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pay pounds—in order to buy gold for shipment to Germany. Since the promise-lenders possess very little actual money, this catastrophe must be avoided at all costs. It can easily be avoided, provided that the power rests in their hands to reduce English prices to the level of German) or German prices to the level of English, as the case may be), for, when that has been accomplished, there will be no need to buy foreign currencies in any large amounts. The English borrower will spend his loan in England, where the promises-to-pay of the lender will be accepted cheerfully.

It is obvious, therefore, that only one real danger threatens the existing credit or promise-lending system—namely, loss of the control of the price-level. Such loss of control, as has already been pointed out, allows good borrowers to get out of debt and so, ultimately, brings borrowing to an end. That is the remote danger. The immediate danger is that borrowers will buy in foreign markets where prices are lower than in the home market, and so stimulate demands upon the lenders for the real money which the lenders do not possess. Promise-lending, in such circumstances, has to be hedged about with restrictions. The borrower must promise not to buy in foreign markets, and there must be high tariff walls to secure that persons who have come into possession of the promise-money in the course of business (that is, without borrowing it) shall not be able to make extensive purchases outside of the country. America's fight for the control of her price-level has resulted already in a huge crop of the restrictions—the tariffs and quotas and exchange embargoes—against which the Money Power never ceases

to inveigh, but without which, so long as the resistance of President Roosevelt remains unbroken, it would not dare to lend a sixpence.

It is interesting to observe that such restrictions are always imposed, in the first instance, by the country which is trying to regain control of its price-level—such was the case in America, and such was the case in France, under Napoleon. They are maintained while the attempt to regain control continues, for they constitute a means towards the end which the country seeking for economic freedom has in view. That end is not, however, as the Money Power asserts, "economic nationalism," a selfish isolation, but release from the tyranny of a private control of prices. If such release could be achieved throughout the world all restrictions on trade would disappear because nations would export only the surplus goods they did not themselves require, and would import only the goods they could not themselves produce. The restrictions are barriers against low-priced goods, the admission of which must, inevitably, lower the level of prices, and so the standard of living, of the countries maintaining the restrictions, *so long as the control of prices remains in private hands*. In other words, they are barriers against the products of starvation-labour. The Money Power often professes to wish for a world level of prices. If such an object were achieved by the nations of the world, promise-lending would determine because, as has been said, all peoples would get out of debt. What, in fact, is meant by financiers, when they rhapsodize about international trade, is the system whereby the nation with the lowest standard of living attracts to itself the

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largest body of loans, and so "deflates" the price-levels of all the other nations, until such time as some rival manages to beat down its standard of living to still lower levels.

And just as Finance knows of only one method of maintaining its power—namely, price control by itself, so it meets every attempt at national control of prices by the same method—namely, terrorism, the destruction of the buying-power of money, famine, social upheaval. Wars, mobs, assassinations are all included among the means which, in varying circumstances, have in the past been employed to punish rebellious peoples. The periods of national, political and social unrest correspond in point of time to the periods when national leadership has been exerted to rid some country of the parasite of international finance by taking the control of the price-level out of the hands of that parasite. It was thus in the days of King Charles I of England, of King Louis XVI of France and of Napoleon. It is thus, now, in the Presidency of Franklin Roosevelt.

Nor will the Money Power desist from its attacks upon the American President until either he or it has been destroyed. He follows in the way where Charles and Louis and Napoleon walked and fell. If, by the grace of God, he is maintained from falling, then the Money Power will inevitably be destroyed throughout the whole world.

When he returned from Austerlitz, Napoleon realized clearly, as has been said, that the struggle upon which he had entered was still very far from its end. His victory had achieved nothing except his salvation from immediate destruction: the victory of Trafalgar, on the

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contrary, had given the merchant-bankers of the City of London the whole world as their field of operations. In the circumstances he had no real hope of making peace, and had good cause, therefore, for anxiety. Peace talks, it is true, took place. They broke down, as usual, on the question of the trade treaty—that is to say, on the question of the control of prices—though arguments about the island of Sicily, as a counterpoint to Malta occupied much of the time of the negotiations. While these discussions were in progress a new coalition was being formed as rapidly as possible. In this case Prussia was destined for the position which, the year before, had been occupied by Austria. Once again Russia joined forces with the enemy.

Meanwhile Ouvrard had been sent to prison in Vincennes and made to disgorge his loot,<sup>1</sup> and the financial system had been reorganized in such a way as to make a repetition of the panic of 1805 impossible. A complete separation was effected between the Treasury and the Bank of France, of which latter body the Emperor himself was President. Napoleon repudiated none of the debts of the State; he refused to contract any new debts. He became his own banker, and thus transformed the monetary system of his Government into a mere accountancy department. If he wanted money he borrowed it—from himself. When he had ceased to need the money he paid it back—to himself. He made loans to industry and agriculture at low rates of interest and in such a way as to enable the borrowers to get out of debt as quickly as possible. Because of the

<sup>1</sup> "I wish," said Napoleon, "that I had a gallows high enough to hang him so that all France might see." Ouvrard, however, was not hanged.

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steadiness of the level of prices they were easily able to accomplish this. One is reminded irresistibly of the official financial bodies (F.R.C., for example) now at work in America.

In consequence, there was a rapid development of the natural resources of France and an equally rapid rise in the standard of living and in the wealth of the French people. The silk industry of Lyons was developed to make good the loss of cotton occasioned by the English blockade, while, under the direct guidance of the Emperor, the sugar-beet industry was established in order that the loss of cane-sugar might be compensated. Bicarbonate of soda had formerly been imported into France. Imports had ceased. Napoleon offered a prize to any chemist who would show how this substance could be prepared from common salt. The famous process of Leblanc soon became available. Further, a substitute for indigo was evolved, and a substitute for coffee—namely, chicory—placed on the market.

In these and many other enterprises the Emperor himself took a leading part. Napoleon was an excellent mathematician and had, all his life, maintained a close contact with scientific work and thought. No one was more firmly convinced than he of the power of science as a means of improving the happiness and comfort of men. Nor could he see any limit to the scope of man's inventive genius. The great roads and canals which he built, and into the details of which he entered with the highest enthusiasm, remain to proclaim his faith. He was one of the first men in Europe to be vaccinated, and he made vaccination compulsory throughout his Empire. The fact that he was at war with England

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diminished in no degree his admiration of and respect for Edward Jenner, and he released an English prisoner, on one occasion, simply because Jenner had written to him asking this favour.

“What,” he cried, “Jenner asks? We can refuse nothing to that man.”

The prize he offered for the best essay on diphtheria, though it produced no substantial result, stands as a memorial of his lively interest in the prevention of and treatment of disease. At St Helena, he declared on one occasion: <sup>1</sup>

“May my son make blossom all that I have sown. May he further develop all the elements of prosperity which lie hidden in the soil of France. If he does that he may become a great ruler.

“My son’s aim must be not merely to reign but to deserve the approbation of posterity. . . . My son must disregard all parties and only consider the mass of the people. . . . He must reward talent, merit and services wherever he finds them.

“Would you like to know what are my real, my very considerable treasures? They shine like the sun. They are the fine harbours of Antwerp and Flushing—the works on the harbours of Dunkirk, Le Havre and Nice, the gigantic basin of Cherbourg and the improvement of the harbour of Venice, the fine roads from Wesel to Hamburg, from Antwerp to Amsterdam, from Mayence to Metz, from Bordeaux to Bayonne, the mountain roads over the Simplon, Mt Cenis, Mont Genèvre, the Corniche road which opens up the Alps in four directions. These roads, which

<sup>1</sup> Las Cases : *Memorial*.

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cost 80,000,000 francs, excel in daring, in extent and as works of art all similar constructions of the ancient world.

"Again, there are the roads from the Pyrenees to the Alps and from Parma to Spezia. In Paris there are the bridge of Jena Austerlitz and the Pont des Artes. There are the bridges of Sèvres, Tours, Roanne, Turin and many others. I caused to be cut the canal which joins the Rhine to the Rhone, through the Danube, and so connects the North Sea with the Mediterranean, the canal between the Scheldt and the Somme. . . . I undertook the rebuilding of the Louvre, the building of storehouses for grain, the building of the Exchange, the construction of the Paris waterworks, weirs, quays and all kinds of adornments. I added beautiful buildings to Rome. I restored the manufactures of Lyons. I erected several hundred cotton factories for spinning and weaving; several million pairs of hands are busy there. I provided the capital for building more than 400 factories for the production of sugar from beetroot. They supplied France and would, had they been kept working for four years longer, have supplied all Europe at price: no higher than those of the produce of the West Indies. I supported the trade which produces as good and as cheap an indigo as can be obtained from the colonies.

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and always strove against them. Loans were not part of my system. France's finances are the best in the world. To whom does she owe them?

"I did not allow anyone to derive any special merit or any political distinction from his wealth. . . . If I had not been overthrown I would have made a complete change in the appearance of commerce as well as of industry. . . . The efforts of the French were extraordinary. Prosperity and progress were growing immeasurably. . . . Enlightenment was making giant strides. New ideas were everywhere heard or published, for I took pains to introduce science among the people. If I had been given time there would soon have been no more artisans in France; all would have become artists. My plan of bringing about a union of the nations—and it is the noblest, most courageous and highest minded of all plans—was wrecked, but it is not lost. A beginning has been made; the force of circumstances will complete the work. Nothing can prevent it. . . .

"The English will now impose a (trade) treaty on France, at least if popular clamour and the opposition of the mass of the nation does not compel them to stay their hands. When I came to the head of the Government the Americans had the insolence to make their payments (for goods) by giving bills on persons in London. Hence the huge profits reaped by the English manufacturers and brokers entirely to our prejudice."

It has been said, in criticism of Napoleon's scientific ability, that he failed to realize the importance of steam.





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and, in the face of historical truth, pretend that the methods and blessings which had come from the revelation of Christ were merely the product of a more advanced form of human reasoning. Napoleon had seen human reason in action; he had seen that, without love and loyalty, men sought only their own advantage. And the more knowledge they brought to this self-seeking the more terrible were the results achieved by them. The revelation that God is love bore no complexion of magic or foolishness in view of that experience.

“Man entering into life,” he said to Las Cases at St Helena,<sup>1</sup> “asks himself: ‘From whence do I come? What am I? Whither am I to go?’ There are so many mysterious questions which urge us on to religion. We eagerly embrace it; we are attracted by our natural propensity; but as we advance in knowledge our course is stopped. Instruction and history are the great enemies of a religion which has been deformed by human imperfection. Why, we ask ourselves, is the creed of Paris neither that of London nor of Berlin? Why does that of St Petersburg differ from that of Constantinople? Why is the latter different from that of Persia, of the Ganges, and of China? Why was the religion of ancient times different from that of our own day? Then reason is sadly staggered; it cries: ‘Oh, religions, religions, they are the creations of man.’ We necessarily believe in God because everything around us proclaims Him; but we know not what to think of the doctrine which has been taught us, and so find ourselves in the position of a watch which goes with-

<sup>1</sup> Las Cases: *Memorial*.

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out knowing anything about the watchmaker who made it.

“And note, in this connexion, the stupidity of those who have taught us about religion. If they had been wise they would have kept from our minds the idea of paganism and the worship of idols, for the absurdity of such worship excites criticism and so leads on to resistance against passive belief. But, on the contrary, they make us spend our youth among the Greeks and Romans with their myriad of gods. I am telling you about the evolution of my own mind. I felt the need of faith. I did believe; but the *moment I acquired knowledge and began to reason* my faith received a shock and lost its certainty. I was thirteen years of age when that happened to me. Perhaps I shall again believe implicitly; God grant that I may. I shall certainly not resist such faith. I do not ask a greater blessing. Such faith, in my view, must constitute a great and real happiness.

“I assure you, however, that the weakness of my religious faith exerted no influence whatever on my conduct in moments of emergency or under the influence of casual temptation to immorality. I have never doubted the existence of God. If my reason failed to comprehend, my mind was not, on that account, the less inclined to adopt. My feelings moved in sympathy with religion.

“When I took the helm of State I possessed, already, settled convictions about the elements by which society is bound together. I had weighed the influence of religion in this respect and found it to be all-important. I was firmly persuaded in my own

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mind and therefore determined to re-establish religion. The resistance I had to overcome in restoring the Catholic Church was so great as to be almost unbelievable. . . .

"The Bishop of Nantes (de Voisin) made me a real Catholic by the efficacy of his arguments, by the excellence of his morals and by his enlightened toleration. . . . He had lived with Diderot, among unbelievers, and had always behaved consistently. He had an answer for everybody; above all, he was wise enough to abandon everything which could not be maintained, and to strip religion of everything which he could not defend. . . . He was my oracle, my luminary; in religious matters he possessed my unbounded confidence. . . . In my disputes with the Pope it was my first care . . . not to touch upon any point of dogma. I was so steady in this resolve that the moment the good and venerable Bishop of Nantes said to me: 'Take care, there you are grappling with a dogma!' I at once turned from the course I was taking."

If many Frenchmen failed to understand the Emperor's care of religion (just as they failed to understand his restoration of kingship) his enemies remained under no illusion. Active efforts were begun to cause a break between Paris and Rome. At the same time help was given to the Royalists and Jacobins, indiscriminately, so that these parties might hamper the Emperor as much as possible.

## CHAPTER XX

### LAND AND WATER

AT Jena, Napoleon met and destroyed the Prussian army. Prussia fell bodily into his hands and he entered Berlin. From that city he sent out a decree that no English goods were to be received into Continental ports.

This was the basis of the Continental System. The object of the system was to compel Lombard Street to pay with gold for English imports of wheat from the Baltic, because, as must be repeated, the Emperor well knew that, if the merchant-bankers were forced to part with gold they would become of all men the most powerful and vociferous advocates of an immediate peace with France, and this for the reason that, if peace was not made, they would be compelled either to cease lending or to close their doors.

The Continental System had its necessary counterpart in the Continental Blockade, by which England prevented the entry into Continental ports of any goods other than English goods or goods which had not paid tribute to herself. The object was to force English goods upon Continental buyers or, failing that, to offset, by a heavy impost, losses of gold from London.

Napoleon's plan depended for its success upon the closing against English goods of all the harbours of the Baltic, North Sea and Mediterranean—a sufficiently

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formidable undertaking. The English plan, on the contrary, depended only on the supremacy of the English navy, which, since Trafalgar, was assured. The odds were long, therefore, that the French Emperor would not succeed. Napoleon knew that. But he knew also that his system was the only chance he possessed of obtaining peace on the terms on which he was willing to make it. He could not remain at war for ever without coming sooner or later to ruin. So long as resistance to him was possible, the City of London would continue to resist and to stimulate others to resist. The Money Power, in short, must be broken; peace with the world would follow. And in that peace he would show the world all the benefits and blessings of his new economic policy, so that, never again, would men allow themselves to be made the slaves of international bankers.

He spoke of his plan as "the land against the sea." But it was more than that. In its essence it was man against money, because it was not directed against English sea power or against the English people, with whom Napoleon had no quarrel, but solely against the Masters of Money, not in England alone, but in Amsterdam and Hamburg and Geneva and even in Paris itself. "Money," said the Emperor, "has no motherland." It is a truth which President Roosevelt has discovered for himself. Napoleon at Berlin envisaged a short, sharp struggle, made possible by the iron discipline which he exercised. He believed that he possessed just enough strength to achieve his purpose. Incidentally his victory had put the Rothschilds at Frankfurt and the finance houses in Hamburg in his hands. Already he exerted,

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through his brother Louis, now King of Holland, a firm grasp of the City of Amsterdam. Thus the Hanse towns, ancient strongholds of money, were separated from London.

Nothing could be accomplished, however, so long as the Russian army remained unbeaten on the frontiers of Prussia. He entered Poland, therefore, where he was received as a saviour,<sup>1</sup> and early in the year 1807 gave battle at the village of Eylau. The Russians fought with exceeding bravery and the battle was drawn. Napoleon had the mortification of seeing his plan thwarted and its execution postponed, probably, for many months. So serious a hitch, he very well knew, might prove fatal.

But he displayed no concern. He reconstituted his army among Polish snows and, so far as he could, put his measures against English trade into force. In June he engaged the Russian army once more, at Friedland, and achieved the resounding victory which had eluded him five months earlier. Instantly he offered peace to the young Emperor Alexander on terms so generous as to remove the sting of defeat.

Alexander was flattered as well as reassured and relieved. The two Emperors met on a raft in the river Niemen and Napoleon unfolded his plan. He asked Alexander what help England had given him for so generously fighting her battles, knowing that, in fact,

<sup>1</sup> Vandal's great work, *Napoleon et Alexandre I*, should be consulted about the Russian and Polish dealings. More recently Calaincourt's *Memoirs* have become available for later stages of the alliance. Reference should also be made to *The Peace Tactics of Napoleon*, by Butterfield. None of these writers understood the financial policy which underlay the military and diplomatic policies, but their work affords a day-to-day picture of Napoleon's activity.

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not a soldier had been furnished—in spite of promises—and that Alexander's request for a loan from the English Government had been refused in somewhat ungracious terms. Napoleon had a text, in these grievances of the Russian, for a sermon on the London bankers who, as it happened, had been engaging in a great speculation in South America at the time when their allies, Prussia and Russia, were being immolated by the French.

Alexander was exceedingly angry with the English and listened, therefore, to Napoleon with enthusiasm. Alone, perhaps, among the sovereigns of Europe this young man understood something of the nature of the King's office, and wished to lead his people against their exploiters. He set the English bankers at the top of the list of exploiters and his own nobles very near them; Napoleon observed that he was afraid of his nobles. Napoleon made a further observation: Alexander's conscience continued to trouble him about his share in the murder of his father, "Mad Paul."

Napoleon seems to have suggested to Alexander that he, Alexander, had been the dupe, in that affair, of interested parties who wished to do business with the City of London—which was strictly true. "I am come," Napoleon's argument ran, "to ask you to restore your father's policy of closing the Baltic against English shipping." It was an opportunity to atone for his sin which the conscience-stricken Alexander found irresistible.

The meetings on the barge had no witnesses, but information about them reached London in so accurate



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a form that the idea that a spy must have been hidden somewhere on the vessel has been suggested. The assumption is not warranted. It proceeds from lack of understanding of the financial system and of the nature of Napoleon's opposition to it. The bankers in London knew exactly why the Emperor of the French was fighting hundreds of miles from home against people who, since his victory at Jena, were powerless to attack him. Finance in every country is bound up with the grain trade—the means of inflicting or allaying starvation.<sup>1</sup> The bankers saw in Alexander the keeper of Europe's chief granary and, therefore, the one man in the world who had power to make or mar Napoleon's Continental System, and so, largely, to determine their own fate. No need, therefore, for a spy on the royal barge. They knew what Napoleon had said. The fact that Alexander had surrendered himself to the charm of his new friend told them the rest of the story. The Baltic was going to be closed once more against English shipping as in the days of Paul. Alexander had renounced the policy of which the assassination of his father had been an expression. The bankers' minds turned uneasily to the Danish fleet lying off Copenhagen. Napoleon and the Prince Royal of Denmark were friends.

A few days later Canning sent the English fleet to Copenhagen with an order to the Danes to surrender their navy. This they seemed reluctant to do; they

<sup>1</sup> This is being shown once again at the present time. The chief trouble which Mr Roosevelt has had to face has been the low price of wheat. The droughts of 1933 and 1934 have upset the financiers' calculations, and may, in days to come, be looked upon as one of the essential means by which humanity's rescue was achieved.

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urged indeed that, as they were at peace with England and enjoyed the position and rights of a sovereign state they were not bound to give up their ships. Canning had anticipated some such reply because he had given orders that, in the event of refusal, the City of Copenhagen was to be bombarded until the Danish ships were surrendered. This was done. After several days, during which large numbers of people were killed and parts of the city destroyed by fire,<sup>1</sup> the Danes reconsidered their decision. Their ships were then removed to an English harbour. There was no necessity after that to make peace, because, officially, peace had not been broken.

The incident has not ceased to excite comment, so unusual was it. The English people, proud with a great and just pride of Nelson's victory at Trafalgar, found it difficult to jubilate very much, because, after all, England was not at war with Denmark, and Copenhagen was, more or less, an open, defenceless city. Why had the English fleet been given orders of so extraordinary a nature? The answer—namely, that Bonaparte meant to use the Danish navy against England—satisfied a large number of the uneasy; but not all of them.

Unhappily, an important lesson which the incident provided was missed—namely, that the Masters of Money do not apply to themselves the rules which they impose upon other people. If it had been Napoleon who had bombarded Copenhagen the world would

<sup>1</sup> The British official report states: "For the last two days the conflagration has been very considerable and at this moment rages with great violence."

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never have heard the end of it. "What," the bankers would have cried, rending their garments, "an act of aggression against a friendly State! The bombardment of an open city without previous quarrel or even declaration of war! Baby killing!" But when the choice lay between loss of gold and loss of reputation, why, very few, if any at all, of these merchant-bankers were Englishmen!

In fact, Canning's stroke was well timed. Nothing but that, perhaps, could have saved Lombard Street and, with it, the credit system, because, as has been said, had the Baltic been closed, the bankers would have had no option but to make peace on Napoleon's terms. Napoleon, newly returned from his campaign, heard the news with dismay. He had promised Alexander world peace; instead he saw world war stretching, once more, before him. How would Alexander behave? Alexander was acting as his father had acted; would he see in the calamity of Copenhagen pledge of his own downfall at the hands of those who had made an end of Paul? If the fear of assassination laid hold of him, he would hate those who had induced him to follow courses likely to lead to his assassination. In that case conscience would be salved by breaking off the French alliance.

So Napoleon argued. His enemies meanwhile made ready to forestall him again. It was obvious to them that, thwarted in the North, he would act swiftly and strongly in the South, so that the sealing up of the Mediterranean might furnish compensation for the failure to seal the Baltic. A blow directed against Portugal (England's ally in the war) was confidently

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anticipated. In fact, Napoleon's statecraft, spurred by necessity, achieved much more than had been looked for. The Emperor of the French secured possession of the throne of Spain as well as of the throne of Portugal.

## CHAPTER XXI

### TIME UNRELENTING

"FEW people," said Napoleon at St Helena, "saw in my Spanish policy the control of the Mediterranean."<sup>1</sup>

Fewer still realized why such control was necessary, for the nature of the struggle in which the French Emperor was engaged was scarcely anywhere understood, and already the Masters of Money were filling Europe and France with propaganda about the Corsican's insatiable and insane ambition. This propaganda, unhappily, made converts among the Cardinals at Rome and penetrated, at last, to the Pope himself, thus effecting the chief object of its authors—namely, the alienation of the Church from Napoleon.<sup>2</sup> A Christian monarchy at war with the Father of Christendom necessarily loses something of its strength.

The quarrel was political, not religious. Its bitterness was due, in large part, to the fact that both sides were acting in good faith, under a heavy compulsion. The Pope, for example, felt that he could not, especially in the troubled state of Europe, abate his claim to full temporal sovereignty without doing damage to his office and to the Church. Few will dispute the justice of this view. In fact, however, Napoleon had no desire to

<sup>1</sup> Las Cases : *Memorial*.

<sup>2</sup> See for Napoleon's struggle with the Church *Le Pape et l'Empereur*, Henri Welschinger, and, in the same connexion, *L'Espagne et Napoléon*, by Geoffroy de Grandmaison.

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challenge the Pope's supremacy. All that he was concerned about was to prevent the entrance of English goods into the ports of the Papal States, which, as he knew, were serving the purpose of distributing centres for the whole of Europe.

Napoleon was hard pressed because Alexander, as had been foreseen, was already weakening in his friendship.

"Without Russia," the French Emperor exclaimed, "the Continental System is an absurdity."

Russia could be held only on condition that a definite will-to-peace was manifested in London. Napoleon dared not neglect the Papal ports. His fatal fear of showing himself weak held him back from such explanations as might have convinced the Pope. He adopted, instead, a peremptory tone. When his demands were refused, he took steps to close the ports. The Pope excommunicated him.

The news of this action excited the liveliest joy in London and all the financial centres where it was interpreted as a death-blow to Christian Monarchy—the only form of government which the Masters of Money have ever feared. No effort was spared to make it known in Spain that the Emperor of the French had taken arms against God's Vicar and so incurred the wrath of Heaven. The opposition to the settlement, by virtue of which Joseph Bonaparte had ascended the throne of Spain flamed out, suddenly, into open revolt and became a religious war.

This second shattering blow at the Continental System—for it was necessary now to abandon Spain or to reconquer it—changed Napoleon's position, both as Emperor and as statesman. He had been Christian

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King; he was become conqueror and tyrant. The faithful in all lands drew away from him. Frenchmen began to ask themselves why they should spill their blood to make him lord of new realms. Was this war to go on for ever? Every complaint and every grumble was registered by the Emperor's enemies so that the disaffected might be encouraged and sustained in their resistance, and unlimited wealth was available for the purchase of traitors. Talleyrand, penniless a few years before, so that he threatened, in a letter to Madame de Staël, to blow out his brains if he could not obtain an income, was now possessed of great wealth. So was Fouché. Josephine, too, was in receipt of subsidies. All these people deplored Napoleon's "ambition," his greed of power and his lack of "virtue"—whatever that may have meant. They deplored, further, the Emperor's behaviour towards the Church, as if this behaviour was piercing the hearts of the ex-bishop and the ex-Oratorian, Talleyrand and Fouché. No spectacle of history is quite so edifying as that of the world's usurers melting in grief because of the afflictions of the Christian Church. The wisdom of the serpent, unhappily, was lacking to the political advisers of the Vatican; they allowed themselves to be persuaded that Napoleon was their enemy and the City of London their friend. The price of that mistake is still being paid.

Napoleon, in the severe crisis of his fortunes, occasioned by the excommunication and by its effect on the Spanish people, displayed an excellent courage. He rejected the idea of abandoning Spain and sent a request to Alexander for an immediate meeting. The Russian Emperor, as he knew, was now, once more, his enemy

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in the sense that he wished to open his ports to English goods and thus to disarm the opposition of his nobles and merchants. Alexander, as has been said, had good reason to fear assassination, but it was not only his conscience which influenced him but also the evil state of his people, who were accustomed to rely upon England for many of the luxuries and comforts of life—notably colonial produce. Napoleon's plan was taking too long to accomplish; the fruits of that plan which the Russian had long ago expected to enjoy, seemed as far away as ever. Nevertheless Alexander came to the meeting at Erfurt with a great show of friendliness. He had a favour to ask which, as he believed, Napoleon would be unable to refuse—namely, Constantinople.

Napoleon was determined not to grant Constantinople, because he foresaw that, if the Russians obtained that place, it would become at once a gateway for English goods—a gateway, moreover, that would not be closed by winter frosts. The Continental System would be destroyed at a blow. His object in meeting Alexander was to point out to him that, with Germany, Prussia and Poland firmly bound to France, any weakening of the Russian alliance, such as must occur if English goods were admitted to Russian ports, would be followed by disaster for Russia in the shape of a restoration of the ancient Kingdom of Poland.

Alexander was anxious, above all things, to avoid such a restoration, and his anxiety was shared in London, where the prospect of a powerful State, under French influence, between Russia and Prussia, was viewed with dismay. Napoleon, in short, was a buyer of time; time in which to conquer Spain and close the Mediterranean



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before the coming of winter should have closed the Baltic. Winter, he argued, would accomplish all that Canning's assault upon Copenhagen had temporarily undone, seeing that a few months only of severely restricted trade were necessary to the subjugation of the London money-lenders. The weight of the calculation is attested by the importance which these money-lenders attached to the Erfurt meeting. The House of Rothschild had established already, in Europe, a postal system which, nominally that of the Holy Roman Emperor, Francis (now the Emperor of Austria), was conducted by the princely family of Thurn and Taxis (Hereditary Postmaster to the Holy Roman Empire). These princes, by arrangement with the Rothschilds,<sup>1</sup> opened letters and divulged to the bankers the information contained in them. The Princess of Thurn and Taxis kept open house in Erfurt during the meeting of Napoleon and Alexander and acted, every night, as Alexander's hostess after Napoleon had gone to bed. In her house the Russian met Talleyrand, who had accompanied the French Emperor and who knew, or professed to know, the full extent of his plans. Talleyrand devoted himself to counteracting Napoleon's influence on the Russian, while their hostess kept her paymasters, the bankers, informed about all that she heard.<sup>2</sup>

Money was immediately forthcoming for a series of blows against the French Emperor. An English expedition had been despatched into Portugal. Funds

<sup>1</sup> See Corti's *The House of Rothschild*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Talleyrand's *Memoirs* should be consulted. But they are not very enlightening. This man burned all his papers and correspondence before he died.

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were placed at the disposal of Talleyrand so that he might organize revolt in Paris. A large loan was made to the Austrians to enable them to equip a new army for the invasion of France. At the same time efforts, not wholly unsuccessful, were made to turn Louis Bonaparte, now King of Holland, from his allegiance to his brother, so that the Dutch ports might be opened secretly to English goods.

Napoleon and Alexander, meanwhile, rode and hunted together in apparent friendship. Goethe was received by them, and Napoleon treated the poet with a show of respect that he withheld from the Emperor.

"You shall write a play," he said to Goethe, "giving a loftier and more imposing picture of Caesar's death than Voltaire has achieved. The world should be made to see that Caesar would have rendered it prosperous, and that things would have been quite different had he only been given time in which to complete his noble plans. Such a tragedy would teach a lesson both to Kings and nations."

Napoleon invited Goethe to come to Paris; Goethe, for his part, never afterwards wavered in his belief in Napoleon's greatness.

Napoleon wrote to Josephine: <sup>1</sup>

"I am pleased with Alexander. He'll support me. If I were a woman I think I should make him my sweetheart."

<sup>1</sup> See the collection of letters from Napoleon to Josephine. Some of these letters were published by Queen Hortense. Masson found and published others. Masson's great works on Napoleon and his family are a mine of information, the value of which it is impossible to exaggerate. The letters were translated by Hall, whose book is of very great value.

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Alexander, meanwhile, wrote to his mother:

“What other means has Russia of maintaining the alliance (unavoidable and necessary for me) with the dreadful Colossus, than by falling in with his ideas for the time being and showing him that he can prosecute his plans without distrust? All our efforts must be directed towards obtaining a free breathing time and working, in the greatest secrecy, to increase our forces.”

Napoleon went direct to Spain to take command of his army in that country. Within a few days Paris was full of rumours that he would never come back,<sup>1</sup> since some sharp-shooter was bound to kill him. The rumours were so circumstantial that much alarm was caused. Another sign which occasioned anxiety was the reconciliation of Fouché and Talleyrand. Fouché had been known as a stout supporter of the Russian alliance, whereas Talleyrand had favoured an alliance with Austria. The conclusion was drawn that the Austrian party was in the ascendant, and this conclusion was supported by the close relations existing between the Empress Josephine and Prince Metternich, the Austrian Ambassador, and his wife. Was it proposed, when news of the assassination of Napoleon reached Paris, to restore the Bourbons with the help of Austrian bayonets?

This, broadly, was the plan. In addition, it was hoped

<sup>1</sup> The story of this plot is very obscure. The writer made a long study of it, and his conclusions were published in *Napoleon's Last Story*. (Peter Davis.) See Metternich's *Memoirs*, the *Memoirs of Queen Hortense*, of Fouché, of Talleyrand, of Lavalette and numerous others. See also the part played by Josephine in the plot. (Masson and Thiers should be referred to.) The preparations of Austria are fully described by Thiers: *History of the Consulate and Empire*, and also by Fournier: *Napoleon*.

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to organize a revolt in Paris so that, even if the Emperor escaped assassination, he would be deposed by his own Chambers. The Austrian mobilization was expected to be helpful, seeing that the French peasantry was growing tired of war, and might be expected, therefore, to support any party which seemed likely to maintain peace.

These elaborate preparations for his downfall show with what anxiety the financial powers regarded Napoleon's Spanish campaign, and bear witness, therefore, to its importance as a means of defending the French system by defeating the system of London. But once more Napoleon achieved his object. A swift campaign brought him to Madrid, where he received the submission of the Spanish authorities. He did not enter the city. Soon afterwards he turned against the English force under Sir John Moore. At that moment however, and rather mysteriously, he got news from Paris which caused him, instantly, to leave his victorious army and rush, at full gallop, back to Paris. That swift stroke crushed the revolt; but *it robbed Napoleon of the expected fruits of his Spanish campaign*. He had not had time to organize the country so that it might make effective and decisive contribution to the Continental System. He was not given time to return to Spain. The Austrian army crossed the French frontier. Once more he found himself compelled to go out on the long road across France to Strasburg and the Rhine. The ice was breaking up along the shore of the Baltic.

In three weeks he was in Vienna. He tried to cross the Danube to give battle to the Austrian army, which had been reformed behind that river. But the bridges were destroyed by the enemy and his forces divided,